

Detainees in PNA jails end 36-day hunger strike

es in Hor order way

NS in Turkey

UAE deposits \$150 million in Central Bank

AMMAN (J.T.) — The United Arab Emirates has made a \$150 million long-term deposit in the Central Bank of Jordan to bolster the Kingdom's foreign currency reserves, Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh said Tuesday. "I have been informed by the CBJ governor that the UAE Central Bank on Tuesday, March 2, deposited a sum of \$150 million as a long-term deposit in the CBJ to further boost the foreign currency reserves of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan," Tarawneh said in a statement carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra. Tarawneh expressed Jordan's appreciation of UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan and the government and people of the UAE for this move, which "reflects the deep and strong brotherly ties between His Majesty King Abdullah and Sheikh Zayed as well as relations between the two countries."

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جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الراي



Israeli embassy guard dies

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — The Israeli security guard shot last week by another security guard at Israel's embassy in Jordan died Tuesday of his wounds, a hospital official said. Gefen Josef Shurek, 24, was in critical condition when he arrived at Jerusalem's Hadassah Hospital and never recovered, spokeswoman Yael Bossem-Levy said. "He had a chest wound and had lost a great deal of blood and this caused brain damage," she told The Associated Press. The guard who fired the shot has been recalled to Israel and the shooting is being investigated by the police, Shron said.

Hijacker surrenders at Paris airport

PARIS (R) — An Italian-speaking man who hijacked an Air France A-320 Airbus with 75 passengers aboard on a domestic flight on Tuesday surrendered to police in the early evening, authorities said. They said no one was hurt. No further details were immediately available about the surrender. The LCI All-News television channel said the hijacker telephoned a French news agency and said his name was Stefano Savorini and he was a member of a group called "Vitalo Missmo." The man, who threatened to detonate a bomb on the plane, first released all but six volunteers from among the passengers and the six crew members.

Germany to appeal U.S. execution

BONN (AFP) — Germany is to appeal to the International Court of Justice in The Hague over the planned execution in the U.S. of German national Walter Lagrand, 37, scheduled for Wednesday, a government source said Tuesday. Justice Minister Herta and Paul Daehmler-Gmelin suggested to Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer in an open letter Tuesday that he should bring the U.S. stance on the execution before the international court. Lagrand's brother Karl, 35, was executed in Florence, Arizona, last Wednesday. The brothers were condemned to death in 1984 after being convicted of stabbing to death a 63-year-old bank manager in a botched robbery in 1982.

Religious group occupies building

MOSCOW (R) — A group of Evangelical Christians was holed up in an administrative building in a remote Siberian town on Tuesday, singing and praying but offering little clue as to their precise demands, officials said. Sergei Litvinenko, head of the local administration in the Aldanskaya region of the vast Yakutia province in eastern Russia, told Moscow's Ekho Moskvy Radio that members of a religious group had occupied the building, demanding compensation for lumber they had provided to local residents. But they refused to say precisely what they wanted in return. They rejected offers of money, broke off negotiations and began singing and praying, Litvinenko said.

White House press corps stuck in Utah

SALT LAKE CITY (R) — The White House press corps, abandoned in Utah when President Bill Clinton cut short his vacation, was stranded again on Tuesday when their bus crashed into the plane that was to ferry them home. The bus carrying some of the 30 reporters, television crews and White House staff left behind when Clinton flew home a day early on Monday, ripped into the wing of the Miami air plane sitting on the tarmac at Salt Lake City International Airport.

Khatib to reopen embassy today

Jordanian, Kuwaiti FM's welcome return to normal bilateral ties

By Caroline Faraj

KUWAIT CITY — Relations between Jordan and Kuwait are "back to normal," Kuwait's foreign minister stated Tuesday after holding talks with Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khatib.

"We are looking for a better future, hoping that relations will become as warm as they were before," Sheikh Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah told journalists accompanying Khatib, who arrived in Kuwait to reopen the Jordanian embassy here after eight years of strained relations over the 1990-91 Gulf crisis. The Kuwaiti foreign minister, who is also deputy prime minister, also announced that he accepted Khatib's invitation to visit Jordan and said he will visit Jordan "in the

very near future, where I will be honored to meet His Majesty King Abdullah and senior officials."

After talks with Kuwaiti leaders here, Khatib told the Jordan Times that his "visit is a political declaration that ties between Jordan and Kuwait have now been restored to their normal status."

Khatib, who arrived in Kuwait yesterday, also met with Emir Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah and delivered a message from King Abdullah.

Last month, the emir granted pardons to 306 prisoners, including the last eight Jordanians held for collaboration with Iraqi forces during the Gulf crisis. Their release, seen as a further sign of goodwill, followed that of 13 other Jordanians in April

1998. Khatib also met with Kuwaiti Crown Prince and Prime Minister Sheikh Sa'd Al Abdullah Al Sabah, who was in Amman three weeks ago to attend the funeral of King Hussein.

Stressing that the leadership of both countries seek to improve relations, Khatib said: "There is a genuine political will in the two countries to push forward the brotherly relations for the benefit of the peoples. Therefore, the door will be opened and nothing will block our way."

Following the meeting with his Kuwaiti counterpart, Khatib told reporters that their in-depth discussions centered on accelerating bilateral relations and reviewing recent regional develop-

ments. "Talks covered a wide range of issues related to the resumption of our political relations, paving the way for good ties in all fields, particularly economic, trade, investments, etc.," Khatib said.

Sheikh Sabah promised that the Jordanian-Kuwaiti Joint committee, which has not met since 1986-87, would "convene very soon." Khatib's visit to the emirate is expected to be followed by several bilateral meetings and contacts on all levels.

Today, Khatib will raise the Jordanian flag at Al Safir Hotel, which will temporarily house the Kingdom's embassy. Jordan has appointed Mohammad Manifi as chargé d'affaires, and Khatib said a new ambassador would be named soon.



His Majesty King Abdullah holds talks with the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff of the French army, Jean-Pierre Kelche (Petra photo)

King meets with French general, Japanese official

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Tuesday met with the chairman of the joint chiefs of staff of the French army, Jean-Pierre Kelche, who condoled the King over the passing away of King Hussein.

During the meeting, King Abdullah and the French general reviewed bilateral relations, especially in the field of joint military training.

King Abdullah praised the two countries' ties and stressed the importance of strengthening them.

The King sent his greetings to French President Jacques Chirac and expressed apprecia-

tion for his participation in King Hussein's funeral.

Also Tuesday, King Abdullah met with Japanese Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Nobutaka Machimura for talks on bilateral issues.

Discussions included the peace process and Japan's role in strengthening the region's stability, promoting development and improving the economic situation.

During the meeting, King Abdullah expressed appreciation for Japan's economic assistance to support developmental projects in the Kingdom.

Planning Minister Nabil

Ammani and the Japanese Ambassador Koichi Matsumoto to Jordan attended the talks.

King Abdullah also inspected the State Security Council, where he was briefed by HRH Prince Talal Ben Mohammed on tasks conducted by the council.

Meanwhile, U.S. Undersecretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs Stuart Eizenstat arrived yesterday for a two-day visit to the Kingdom. Eizenstat will meet with King Abdullah, Prime Minister Fayez Tarawneh and senior Jordanian officials, a press release from the U.S. embassy in Amman said.

Israel frees Lebanese, Palestinian prisoners

TYRE (R) — Israel on Tuesday freed a Lebanese and a Palestinian imprisoned inside the Jewish state since the early 1990s, security sources said.

They said the detainees, Palestinian Mahmoud Al Ali and Lebanese Qassem Faris, were escorted out of Israel by the International Committee of the Red Cross which then took them to the southern Lebanese city of Tyre. Al Ali was arrested in 1990

while Faris was detained three years later. They were charged with belonging to guerrilla groups fighting to oust Israeli troops from southern Lebanon.

Israel, which had controlled parts of the south since 1978, carved out a 15 kilometres deep zone in the area in 1985, saying it needed to protect its borders from potential guerrilla attacks.

Scores of Lebanese are imprisoned inside the occu-

pation zone. Many more serve jail terms in Israeli prisons, which has sparked criticism from human rights watchdog Amnesty International.

In January, Israel's supreme court weighed whether the Jewish state could hold foreign nationals without trial as "bargaining chips" in negotiations over Israeli soldiers that went missing during military operations in Lebanon. The court had been dis-

cussing an appeal of a 2-1 ruling a year earlier that said it was possible to hold foreigners prisoner as "bargaining chips."

A spokesman for Israel's court administration, Moshe Gorali, said on Tuesday the Jan. 27 deliberation adjourned without a decision. He said there would be another meeting of the nine-member panel and then a decision, but no date had been set.

Israeli candidates square off over Lebanon withdrawal

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel's war of attrition in south Lebanon took centre stage in election campaigning on Tuesday as the country prepared to bury its highest-ranking officer killed in Lebanon since 1982.

Opposition Labour Party leader Ehud Barak attacked Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for failing to get Israel's troops out of south Lebanon and pledged he would bring them home by June 2000 if he wins a general election on May 17.

"Netanyahu is leading a government that has been bogged down in every field. You need balls to move this issue, to start going forward and stop this incessant jabbering," Barak said.

Netanyahu said ex-army chief Barak had helped trap Israel's forces in Lebanon and promised that he, too, could have the troops out within a year. But he said setting a specific date would play into the hands of pro-Iranian Hezbollah guerrillas.

The debate was sparked by the killings of seven Israelis, including Brigadier General Erez Gerstein, by Hezbollah forces fighting to oust Israel from its south Lebanon occupation zone in two separate incidents in the space of a week.

Israel responded with air strikes on Hezbollah targets deep in Lebanon but threats of a wider Israeli offensive fizzled out after Hezbollah held off from firing into northern Israel.

Gerstein, the most senior officer to be killed in Lebanon since the early days of Israel's invasion in 1982, was due to be buried with full military honours later on Tuesday.

an arrangement that will guarantee the security of the northern towns," Barak told Israel radio.

He said he would reach a deal by restarting moribund peace talks with Syria, the main power broker in Lebanon, and by marshalling world backing for the possible deployment of an international force along the Israel-Lebanon border.

Barak said a Lebanon pull-back could be implemented even before Israel had completed peace talks with Damascus on the fate of the Golan Heights, a strategic plateau Israel occupied in 1967.

Netanyahu, whose Lebanon initiatives have foundered in nearly three years in power, said a year would be enough for him to leave Lebanon either through a deal with Syria or by unilaterally pulling out — an idea he has so far resisted.

"Estimate that we will find a way, by one of these two possibilities, to get the army out in the coming year. I will of course not commit to an iron date," Netanyahu told army radio.

He said he would not pay an "exaggerated price" for a deal with Syria, charging Labour would give away too much on the Golan.

Netanyahu said his government had been discussing ideas for a unilateral pullback for months but said any such step would have to be carried out without "exposing the northern border to too great a danger of renewed Hezbollah attacks." He did not elaborate.

Foreign Minister Ariel Sharon, a hawk who as defence minister engineered Israel's 1982 Lebanon invasion, has advocated a phased unilateral pullback from south Lebanon.

Nearly 800 Palestinians stripped of Jerusalem residency last year

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel stripped nearly 800 Palestinians of their right to live in Jerusalem last year in what critics call a "silent transfer" of Arabs from the occupied city, officials said Tuesday.

An interior ministry spokeswoman said the Jerusalem residency permits of 788 Palestinians had been cancelled last year on the grounds that they had "made the centre of their lives outside the country."

Of the total, 618 of the residents had been living abroad and 170 in the West Bank or Gaza Strip, the

spokeswoman, Tova Ellinson, told AFP.

Israeli and Palestinian human rights groups have long condemned the practice of revoking Palestinians' permits to live in east Jerusalem, which Israel occupied in 1967 and illegally annexed as part of its own capital.

Many of those who lose their residency rights are native-born Jerusalemites whose families had lived in the city for generations. In most cases, they were forced by housing shortages to move to neighbouring towns in the West Bank or travelled abroad for work or study.

The loss of Jerusalem residency deprives families both of the right to enter Israel and access to schooling or social and medical benefits in the country. In tandem with the residency cancellations, Israeli authorities also pursue an aggressive policy of demolishing new homes or housing additions built in east Jerusalem without authorisation.

The interior ministry issued 201 such demolition orders in 1998, although only nine were actually carried out, the Haaretz newspaper reported Tuesday, citing internal ministry documents.

The Israeli-controlled municipality also issued 38 demolition orders last year for east Jerusalem homes.

Palestinians complain that Israeli authorities issue only a trickle of construction permits for Arabs in east Jerusalem, forcing residents with growing families to build illegally.

In a 1998 report, the Israeli human rights groups B'tselem and Hamoked accused authorities of waging a campaign of "silent transfer" of Arabs from east Jerusalem to undermine Palestinian demands to

make the sector the capital of a future independent state.

Since Israel annexed east Jerusalem in 1967, it has settled more than 160,000 Jews in the area. A census by the Palestinian National Authority a year ago put the Palestinian population of the city at around 200,000, while Israel says about 160,000 Arabs live there.

The international community has never recognised the Israeli claim to east Jerusalem and the future status of the city is to be negotiated between Israel and the Palestinians under the Oslo peace accords.

U.S.-led air strikes cost Iraq millions in lost oil revenues

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Sanctions-hit Iraq faced mounting losses in oil revenues on Tuesday after an escalation of U.S.-led air strikes left its export pipeline out of action for a third day.

After the heaviest pounding since the Desert Fox air war in December, an official Baghdad daily warned that the escalation could spark an "explosion" in the Middle East.

The export pipeline from northern Iraq to Turkey has been shut down since Sunday afternoon, costing Baghdad some \$10 million a day, based on a price of \$8 a barrel.

Under a U.N.-authorised deal, Iraq pumps around 1.2 million barrels a day through the pipeline, or 57 per cent of its total exports. The rest is exported from Iraq's port of Mina Al Bakr on the Gulf.

The revenues are used to import humanitarian supplies for Iraq's 22 million population, living under sanctions since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

An Iraqi official said technicians were "trying to work out how to restart pumping without having to wait for repairs of the destroyed installations," which could take several weeks.

The raids on Monday in which the Ain Zala communications centre northeast of Mosul was hit "complicated the situation," he told



An Iraqi nurse gives an injection Tuesday to two-year-old Hibba Ali at Saddam Hussein Hospital in Baghdad. Iraq has taken delivery of \$620 million worth of medicines since the oil-for-food programme was launched in 1996 (AFP photo)

AFP, asking not to be named.

Pumping stopped after a control station north of Mosul was damaged Sunday. Oil officials said

repairs would take "a few days."

At the communications centre, Hussein Fattal from the Northern Oil Company said Monday's bombing caused \$2.5 million of damage which would take "several months" to repair.

The communications centre hit on Monday is one of a series which relays information along the pipeline linking the northern Iraqi oil fields of Kirkuk to the Turkish port of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean.

On Tuesday afternoon, metal debris was still scattered up to 100 metres away from what remained of the building. A nearby aerial was intact and standing, but its connecting wires had been blasted away.

He said the one person killed and nine others injured in Monday's air raid were all employees of the centre.

At the United Nations, the coordinator of the programme overseeing distribution of humanitarian supplies in the Kurdish-held north said Monday that the raids were impeding implementation of its work.

"We are right now continuing to do our work fairly much as it is expected from us, but if the frequency and the civilian damages continue and increase, then we have to rethink," said Baghdad-based coordinator Hans Von Sponeck.

On the political front, Al

Jumhouriya newspaper warned that the U.S. military escalation would have "serious consequences. It threatens to spark a widespread explosion in the region."

In Washington, the Pentagon announced that U.S. F-15 fighters dropped tonnes of laser-guided bombs in strikes on Iraqi communications, radio relay and anti-aircraft artillery sites.

The strikes were the heaviest since the Desert Fox assault launched by Washington and London in mid-December, the U.S. military said. They were in response to "several incidents of Iraqi radar targeting coalition aircraft."

U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen acknowledged that the raids could have been to blame for the halt of oil exports but insisted that an Iraqi communications facility was targeted on Sunday.

U.S. pilots have now been given "greater flexibility to attack those systems which put them in jeopardy," he announced.

U.S. and British forces are in the third month of a campaign of nearly daily air strikes, which began by targeting surface-to-air missile batteries but are now zeroing in on air defence headquarters.

Washington has pledged no let-up in the strikes as long as Baghdad challenges the two "no-fly" zones, in north and south Iraq.

Israel, Lebanon tell EU they want to lower tensions

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israel and Lebanon have told the European Union's (EU's) special Middle East envoy they want to reduce tensions along their border, a senior EU official said on Tuesday. "The main message from both sides was that they wanted to avoid an escalation," said Bernardino Leon Groff, a senior adviser to EU envoy Miguel Angel Moratinos.

He said Moratinos had spoken to Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss and to Israel's coordinator of activities in south Lebanon, Uri Lubrani, by telephone on Monday. The contacts followed an Israeli air offensive launched on Sunday night on Hizbollah guerrilla targets in Lebanon. The air raids were carried out after an Israeli brigadier general, two other soldiers

and a journalist were killed in a roadside bombing by the Iranian-backed Hizbollah in Israel's south Lebanon occupation zone. The brigadier general, Erez Gerstein, was the highest ranking Israeli soldier to be killed in combat in Lebanon since Israel's 1982 Lebanon invasion. "We asked them to do their utmost to restore calm. We are trying to avoid an escalation of violence,"

Leon Groff told Reuters by telephone from Brussels. The U.S. and Russia have also urged both sides to exercise restraint. Hizbollah is fighting to oust Israel and its South Lebanon Army militia ally from Israel's self-declared 15 km wide security zone in south Lebanon. Israel set up the zone in 1985 to protect its northern towns against cross-border attacks.

Lebanon scoffs at threats as ballot box gimmick

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanon scoffed Tuesday at Israeli threats of harsh reprisals after a spate of deadly attacks by Islamist guerrillas, declaring that the Jewish state has failed to achieve its goals even after 21 years of occupation. While its troops have been placed on maximum alert, Lebanon does not appear to expect Israel to act on vows to avenge its mounting troop losses in its northern neighbour, considering the warnings mere ballot box gimmicks.

"What came out of the Israeli guns was smoke instead of fire after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu weighed up his options," said the editorial in the leading Al Nahar newspaper.

Netanyahu seems to have decided that "aggression against southern Lebanon does not pay, especially ahead of the important May 17 elections," it said.

Both Netanyahu and his main rival, Labour Party leader Ehud Barak, vowed Tuesday to withdraw within a year from Lebanon where

Israel has lost more than 1,200 troops since it first invaded in 1978.

"The current situation does not allow Israel to launch a large-scale military operation," said Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Fadlallah, spiritual guide of pro-Iranian Shiite Muslim Hizbollah group in Lebanon.

"The declarations of the Israeli leaders show their indecisiveness on what actions to follow and that they have no plan to deal with the situation," he said in remarks published Tuesday.

Netanyahu announced Monday a "new policy" of bolder reprisals after the deaths of seven Israelis in Lebanon in less than a week in attacks by guerrillas from the Iranian- and Syrian-backed Shiite Muslim group Hizbollah.

But Israel's guns have been silent since Sunday night.

"Implementing these threats will bring nothing new to Israel, as 21 years of occupation has brought nothing, because Israel did

not succeed in meeting any of its objectives, whether to set up a safe border or sign a peace treaty," the pro-Syrian Al Safir daily said.

Fadlallah said former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres lost a 1996 election because of the Grapes of Wrath offensive when 175 Lebanese were killed, most of them civilians, including 105 refugees at a U.N. base in Cana.

Israel has invaded its northern neighbour twice, in 1978 and 1982, but repeated military operations have been unable to crush resistance groups.

Hizbollah, which spearheads the guerrilla war against the occupation and has proven to be able to mobilise up to 7,000 combatants for emergencies, is the most persistent thorn in the Jewish state's side.

The group's leaders have repeatedly said that residents of northern Israel "cannot live in peace and security as long as our families in southern Lebanon continue to be harmed."

The Christian newspaper Al Anwar newspaper said

there was little chance of a large-scale Israeli military operation into Lebanon, adding that Israel "can now only carry out limited strikes against Hizbollah."

Hizbollah's deadly attacks have provoked a surge in demands across Israel for a pullout from the Lebanese "quagmire" and dealt a blow to the Israeli army's tough image.

Last year, Netanyahu said he accepted U.N. Security Council Resolution 425, adopted in 1978, which calls for Israel to withdraw "forthwith," although he is demanding security guarantees from the Lebanese government.

"The Israelis have tried everything from invasions, occupations, military operations and daily bombardments, but it is time for them to acknowledge that withdrawal is the only alternative to bring peace and security," a Lebanese government official said.



WELCOME HOME: Palestinian Mohammad Nimr Al Ali is hugged by his sister outside the Lebanese army barracks in the southern ancient Lebanese city of Tyre shortly after he was released from an Israeli jail where he served ten years for anti-Israeli activities. Ali and another Lebanese national were handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross at the border town of Naqoura and then transferred to the Lebanese army (AFP photo)

Rebel attack said repelled in oil-rich state

KHARTOUM (R) — A pro-government Sudanese militia repelled an attack by southern rebels in oil-rich Unity state, killing 47 of them and taking 58 prisoner, a member of Sudan's parliament said in remarks published on Tuesday.

The private Al Usba newspaper quoted legislator Toot Galouk as saying Major General Paulino Matip's forces had inflicted heavy losses on rebels in Mayom province in Unity state.

"Galouk did not say when the main rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) had launched the attack, but said

Matip's forces were in complete control of the area. No independent account of the fighting was available.

The Islamist Khartoum government has been fighting a 15-year war with the SPLA in the mainly Christian and animist south.

Rick Machar, chairman of the coordinating council that rules the south for Khartoum, was quoted on Tuesday as saying his party was holding talks with SPLA representatives.

Members of the United Democratic Salvation Front (UDSF), the political party formed by several southern rebel factions that

made peace with Khartoum in 1997, were reported to be holding their third day of talks with the SPLA on Tuesday.

The talks, in the SPLA-held area of Warab in Bahr Al Ghazal state, were the first conducted by the UDSF factions as a separate body and not as part of a government delegation.

The UDSF delegation is led by Makuc Youk, a state minister in the state-owned national development corporation. Salva Kiir, deputy to SPLA leader John Garang, is speaking for the SPLA.

BRIEFS

Police recover 30 stolen Israeli cars

RAMALLAH (AFP) — Palestinian police have handed over 30 stolen Israeli vehicles following raids on chop-shops in two West Bank towns, a security chief said on Tuesday. Twenty-six Israeli vehicles were recovered from Qalqilya in the north of the West Bank and were handed over to Israeli police on Tuesday. Palestinian police Colonel Aoun Al Samara told journalists in Ramallah. Sunday, police handed over another six vehicles found in the oasis town of Jericho near the Jordanian border, he said.

Iraq invents its own Viagra

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Iraq has come up with its own version of the male anti-impotence drug Viagra, in the form of an injection combined with an ointment, a newspaper said Tuesday. An industry ministry official told the weekly Al Itihad that the treatment would be used mostly for diabetes and cost much less than the drug produced by the U.S. firm Pfizer.

Arab committee on Iraq to meet in Syria

DAMASCUS (R) — An Arab foreign ministers committee, formed to help remove U.N. sanctions imposed on Iraq for invading Kuwait, will hold its first meeting in Damascus on Sunday, officials said.

Truce committee brings meeting forward

BEIRUT (AFP) — Lebanese Prime Minister Salim Hoss said the international committee monitoring a 1996 truce will meet later Tuesday in an attempt to defuse tensions in south Lebanon. "There is a improvement in the situation on the ground," he said, announcing to reporters that the meeting had been brought forward from Wednesday. "We estimate that it is the start of a de-escalation."

Iran's municipal elections a resounding success for women

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian women have put up a strong showing in the country's first ever municipal elections, a trend highlighted by the victory of reformist President Mohammad Khatami's sister.

Fatemeh Khatami told AFP Tuesday she garnered 16,000 votes, three times more than her closest rival, in the central desert town of Ardakan, the home of the Khatami family, and where the president was born.

"I considered that my age prevented me from undertaking such activities, but the people encouraged me to stand," said the 61-year-old mother of six.

"I have always worked to propagate culture and religion, but now we shall have to provide remedies for people's problems," she said. "It's still too early to say what we're going to do but what is certain is that I want to be of service to the people," she added.

Her election is a reflection in part of her brother's

popularity, and the respect in which the Khatami family is held locally, but it is also symptomatic of the success of women candidates throughout the country as shown in results so far from Friday's poll.

The success of the women was particularly striking in that they accounted for only were a small minority of candidates — just 4,000 of the 300,000 hopefuls standing.

Preliminary figures indicate that two women won council seats in the holy

city of Qom, 130 km south of Tehran.

Women did very well in the northern province of Gilan on the Caspian where 25 women were elected out of the 37 standing in various localities. In Shiraz in the south, a woman standing as a reformist took second place, while in Bahar, a large town in the western province of Hamadan, women reformers came first, second and third. In Urmunieh, capital of the Turkish frontier province

of west Azerbaijan, a woman reformer is leading the poll.

The female vote contributed largely to Khatami's success in the 1997 presidential election, and the overall results of the municipals so far shows that his backers reformists still have the wind in their sails.

In Tehran, seen as the key battleground between reformers and conservatives Khatami supporters are set to win at least 12 out of the capital's 15

seats. Abdullah Nouri, a former interior minister impeached by the conservative parliament last year after allowing pro-Khatami demonstrations which led to clashes with hardliners, is leading the count.

Apart from Nouri, four other top aides of the president were also well ahead — including a woman, Jamileh Kadirvar, wife of Culture Minister Ataollah Mohajerani.

And in counts in the provinces, reformers

appeared well-placed in all of the three-quarters of councils which had published some results by Monday, giving them a solid power base from which to challenge the conservatives' domination of parliament in general elections next spring.

In a speech to a women's university in Tehran Tuesday Khatami spoke once again in favour of "equality of rights between men and women," and said women should be evaluated in their public and professional life "in accordance with their qualities, regardless of their sex."

Iran already has 13 women members of parliament, and one woman vice president. Massumeh Ebtekar.

However, the selection bodies which have to vet candidates have always turned down women standing for the presidential election or for the Council of Experts, which appoints the country's supreme spiritual leader.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

19:10 News headlines
19:35 Doc. — Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00 Islamic History in Jordan
21:30 On the Banks of Jordan
22:00 News in English
22:10 Doc. — National Geographic
23:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

PRAYER TIMES

04:41 Fajr
05:58 (Sunrise) Duha
11:48 Dhuhur
15:05 Asr
17:37 Maghreb
18:54 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Swefish, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624833/4624811
St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

German-speaking Evangelical
Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweifish
Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757

The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the
Department of Meteorology

Temperatures are expected to
dip slightly. Scattered showers
are expected in the northern
and central parts of the Kingdom.
Winds will be westerly
moderate to active. In Aqaba,

moderate to warm weather
conditions will prevail, winds
northerly moderate, and seas
calm.

Amman 06/14
Aqaba 10/22
Deserts 04/16
Jordan Valley 12/21

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 15, Aqaba 22
Humidity readings: Amman
54 per cent. Aqaba 35 per
cent.

Following are the tempera-
tures expected today in the fol-
lowing areas:
Ajloun 03/10
Jerash 06/16
Um Qays 07/15
Madaba 06/15
Petra 03/19
Dead Sea 10/22

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Tawfiq Qub'ain. 4623029
Dr. Awmi Hawamdeh. 5332350
Dr. Ghaleb Zarwaidh. 4126011
Dr. Khalidoun Asfour 5332600
AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy 5661912

Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy 5537004
Rakn Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh (02)250080
Fou'ad Pharmacy (02)275340

ZARQA:
Dr. Akram Haddad. (05)985550
Palestine Pharmacy. (05)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre. 4637111
Civil Defence Department 5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Res-
cue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192. 4621111. 4637777
Fire Brigade 4617101
Blood Bank 4775121
Highway Police 5343402
Traffic police 4896390
Public Security Dept. 4630321
Hotel Complaints 5605800
Price Complaints 5661176
Water & Sewage Complaints 489467
Amman Municipality Com-
plaints 4787111
Telephone Information (directo-
ry assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 0132
Central Amman Telephone Repairs
..... 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs 5661101
Jordan Television 4773111
Radio Jordan 4774111

Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co. 4636381
RJ Flight Information 44-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special
Surgery 5921199
The Islamic. Abdl 5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre. 5856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity 4642816
Akileh Maternity 4642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman. 4636140
Palestine. Shmeisani 5609071
Shmeisani Hospital 5607431
Jordan Hospital 5607530
University Hospital 5353444
Al-Muasher Hospital 56672779
Al-Ahli, Abdali 5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 577101/3
Al-Bashir 4775111/26
Army, Marka 4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 5157100
Amal Hospital 5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre 5353000

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital
Zarqa National Hospital
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital
Roman Catholic Hospital
Ibn Al Naifas Hospital
Rosary Sisters Hospital
Specialty Hospital

FOR THE TRAVELLER
QUEEN ALIA
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT

This information is supplied by
Royal Jordanian (RJ) information
department at the Queen Alia
International Airport Tel.
44153200-5, where it should
always be verified. Information on
other flights can be supplied on
phone 44 (52700). Information on
Royal Wings flights can be sup-
plied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ)
Flights
07:30 Damascus (RJ)

08:35 Jeddah (RJ)
08:50 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:55 Larnaca (RJ)
15:00 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
16:25 London (RJ)
16:35 Brussels (RJ)
16:50 Istanbul (RJ)
17:30 Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
17:55 Frankfurt, Vienna (RJ)
18:10 Rome (RJ)
19:05 Paris, Berlin (RJ)
23:10 Beirut (RJ)
23:59 Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights
09:30 Cairo (MS)
10:30 Jeddah (SV)
12:20 Kuwait (KU)
13:10 Tunis (TU)
13:20 Bahrain (GF)
14:30 Milan (AZ)
15:05 Vienna (OS)
15:30 Algiers (AH)
16:45 Paris (IY)
18:05 Karachi, Abu Dhabi (PK)
18:40 Beirut (ME)
20:30 Frankfurt (LH)
00:55 London, Damascus (BA)
01:25 Athens (OA)
02:00 Rome (AZ)

Princess Haya Hospital (03)2014111

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
08:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka
Airport) (RW)
17:30 Gaza (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)

18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at
QAIA) (RW)

DEPARTURES

06:50 Larnaca (RJ)
08:25 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
09:45 Rome (RJ)
11:00 Istanbul (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
19:35 Beirut (RJ)
19:45 Colombo (RJ)
20:00 Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
20:15 Bombay (RJ)
20:15 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:25 Cairo (RJ)
20:35 New Delhi (RJ)
21:00 Calcutta, Bangkok (RJ)
21:15 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
22:45 Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights
06:30 Larnaca (CY)
06:50 Damascus, London (BA)
07:25 Paris (AF)
10:30 Cairo (MS)
12:00 Medina, Jeddah (SV)
13:20 Kuwait (KU)
14:10 Bahrain (GF)
14:10 Tunis (TU)
15:50 Vienna (OS)
17:45 Sanaa (IY)
19:30 Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)
20:00 Beirut (ME)
02:45 Athens (OA)
03:00 Milan (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Air-
port) (RW)
13:30 Gaza (from Marka Air-

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News in brief

Cooler weather on the way

AMMAN (Petra) — The weather will be partly cloudy with a possibility of scattered showers of rain in the northern and central parts of the Kingdom. Meteorology Department sources said Tuesday. The sources expected a slight drop in temperatures.

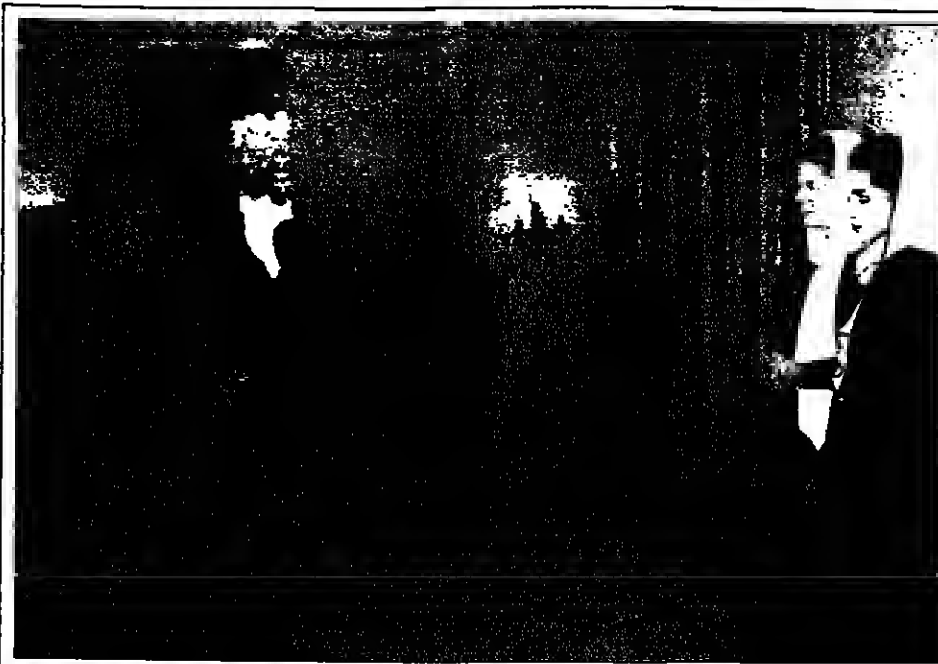
Exports drop by two per cent

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan's exports in 1998 totalled JD1,044 million compared with JD1,067 million in 1997 — a decrease of 2.2 per cent, said Hussein Sbakhneh, director general of the General Statistics Department. Sbakhneh added that national imports amounted to JD2,715 million in 1998, compared with JD2,908 in 1997, thus registering a 6.6 per cent decrease.

WHAT'S GOING ON FILM

* German film "Himmel Ohne Sterne" (with subtitles in English) at Goethe-Institut, Jabal Amman at 7:30 p.m.

Save water... every drop counts!



CONDOLENCES: Her Majesty Queen Noor and HRH Princess Rania Abdullah receive Orthodox Christian clergy from Karak on Tuesday at Basman Palace. Jordanian and U.N. officials and members of the Queen's organisations also offered condolences at the Royal Court. Queen Noor and Princess Rania also met a delegation from the National Organisation of Arab-American Women and the Institute of Arab-American Women, who flew to Jordan to pay their condolences to the Queen (photo by Crystal)

Jordan, Japan sign \$21.2 million agreement to support balance of payments, economic reform

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan and Japan yesterday signed a \$21.2 million grant agreement to support Jordan's balance of payments and economic reform programme.

The agreement was signed by Minister of Planning Nabil Ammari and Japanese Ambassador to Jordan Koichi Matsumoto in the presence of the Japanese Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Nobutaka Machimura, who arrived in Jordan yesterday on a two-day visit.

The grant can be used for the payment of non-military imports from any country. During his visit, he will hold talks with His Majesty King Abdullah and Prime Minister Faysal Tarawneh on bilateral relations, and the Middle East peace process.

Yesterday, Her Majesty Queen Noor received the Japanese secretary and his wife Junko Machimura, who is accompanying him on the visit, at Bab Al Salam Palace. The secretary and his wife offered their condolences on the death of His Majesty King Hussein.

During Machimura's visit, a second grant agreement will be signed. The \$4.3 million grant will be used to improve equipment for a central workshop of road construction and maintenance machinery. This project will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of road construction through the supply of maintenance equipment for construction machinery and vehicles in the central workshop.

The Ministry of Public

Works and Housing is constructing the new workshop in Zarqa.

The Japanese secretary's visit is part of an 11-day regional tour that began on Feb. 27 and will end March 9. He will also visit Turkey, Israel, the Palestinian self-rule territories, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. During his visit to Israel, Machimura will tour areas of the Golan Heights where the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force troops are stationed.

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries, Jordan and Japan have developed ties that relate to almost every aspect of life: political, cultural, trade, economic, youth and technology.

Japanese official visits to Jordan are frequent. The most recent was a visit in January by the Japanese foreign minister.

Jordan is the largest per capita recipient of Japan's official development assistance of all developing countries. In addition to the assistance agreements signed during Machimura's visit, the Japanese contribution to Jordan has reached \$145 million in the last 12 months; \$63 million for the Greater Amman Water Supply System Improvement Project that aims to double the capital's water supply through the Zai Water Treatment Plant and \$63 million for the Tourism Sector Development Project.

JBA, chambers resist two-day weekend

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordanian economic organisations Tuesday expressed their opposition to the idea of a two-day weekend in Jordan, saying it would have a negative impact on Jordan's productivity and would increase production cost.

The organisations' views were conveyed to Prime Minister Faysal Tarawneh in a memorandum signed by Hamdi Tabba'a, chairman of the Jordan Businessmen Association, Haidar Murad, president of the Federation of Jordanian Chambers of Trade and Khalidoun Abu Hassan, president of the Amman Chamber of Industry.

"We are going through difficult economic circumstances with economic growth of the past two years reaching a mere one per cent, far below the rate of population growth, which means

lower production and lower profits," said the memorandum.

"We do not need an experiment that might exacerbate the economic and social problems, and we believe that our policy should be to increase production, offer more investment incentives and create job opportunities," said the memorandum.

The memorandum added that "the idea of a two-day weekend can be applied once Jordan has achieved economic prosperity and when we find out that our employees are too exhausted and have acquired a surplus income to spend an extra day off. Before applying the two-day weekend, we need an in-depth study of the economic situation. Jordan's factories and other institutions, which should be made to increase continued production, have

close dealings with government departments. Extension of the day's working hours requires a lunch break which is normally followed by slow work and poor performance. This has its own negative influence on production. Female employees and workers in remote regions would not be able to cope and to continue working because of the late hours and late return home; problems that could force them to change their place of residence, quit work or move to the capital."

The memorandum said an extended weekend for low-income employees and the absence of recreation could result in increased social problems.

The memorandum was the outcome of a meeting by the economic organisations to review the idea of two-day weekend and said the organi-

sations conducted a study of the holidays in the other Arab states and foreign countries which found the present number of holidays in Jordan are already far greater in number than those in both Arab and industrial countries.

The memorandum followed speculation in the press that the government is near a decision on a two-day weekend in its own departments following the Central Bank of Jordan's endorsement of a two-day weekend in the financial sector.

The new banking schedule for Jordanian banks came into force March 1. Bank employees are now working from 8:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m., with a half hour lunch break. The total number of hours will be 40 a week, up from 36 under the previous system.

Saudi delegation expected soon to discuss investments, labour transfers

By Tareq Ayyoub

AMMAN — Information Minister Nasser Judeh on Tuesday said that a Saudi delegation is expected here soon to discuss new Saudi investments in the country in line with pledges made last month to extend financial assistance to Jordan.

No date has been set for the visit, but Judeh, who was speaking to reporters during a weekly press briefing, said that among the issues expected to be discussed during the visit are ways to intensify bilateral trade.

The visit was agreed on during meetings in Riyadh last month between Saudi officials and a senior Jordanian eco-

nomic delegation, headed by Deputy Prime Minister Taher Kana'an, Judeh added. The Jordanian team met with Saudi finance and trade ministers and the head of the Saudi Development Fund (SDF).

The delegation also discussed with the SDF officials ways to finance certain number of projects in Jordan in line with projects that had been financed by the fund in the Kingdom, before it halted cooperation with Jordan following Amman's perceived tilt towards Iraq during the 1990-91 Gulf crisis.

Judeh said "there is a Saudi desire to discuss these projects." The projects would be mostly in the southern areas of the Kingdom, and would be

aimed "at increasing productivity and creating job opportunities there."

"The two sides also discussed facilitating the transfer of the Jordanian workforce to Saudi Arabia," he added.

The minister did not give any information about the volume of the expected Saudi assistance, but local news reports have indicated it ranges from \$400-\$700 million in investments and direct assistance.

Following the death of King Hussein, many countries, especially the U.S., Germany and some Gulf states, pledged to extend assistance to Jordanian economy through direct loans or debt forgiveness.

Education sector faces reform: New texts and teacher ranking under study

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — The Ministry of Education is forging ahead with plans to introduce a comprehensive modern school curriculum in an effort to reform the educational system.

The ministry will also introduce a new hierarchy for public school teachers, giving them professional titles that reflect their actual positions and responsibilities.

"We are trying to renew scholastic books both in form and in content," Education Ministry Secretary General Izzat Jaradat told a press conference on Monday.

He said under the new plan, the ministry, which in the past formed committees to draft accredited school text books, instead will ask local publishing houses to work on and to submit texts which could be used for teaching at state-run schools.

Such competition, officials said, would encourage authors to be innovative to generate students' interest. The ministry believes that this would reflect positively on the quality of education as most students complain of a dull curriculum that relies more on memorisation than on research and analysis.

"There will be one accredited curriculum for the elementary, preparatory and secondary classes, but the various publishing houses will come up with different books and the best will be chosen," Jaradat added.

Private schools normally adopt the state syllabus but

each adds extra books to complement the standard system.

"This plan will give a chance to publishing houses in Jordan to improve and develop their standards and to come up with new material," Jaradat said.

He said the new curriculum will focus on modern academic and scientific changes that Jordan will need to cope with challenges posed by the third millennium.

The new teacher classification system will prod educators to improve their standards in order to be promoted.

The ministry has been working on teachers' professional titles for three years, Jaradat said.

"The main idea is to offer economic, moral and social incentives for teachers, and to create positive competition between them," Jaradat explained.

"They should feel that they are developing in their careers but that they will only be able to achieve that if they work on developing their standards," he added.

The system, to be implemented in the near future, will give four professional ranks for teachers: an assistant teacher, a teacher, first degree teacher and a specialised teacher. Currently, all teachers have one title regardless of their work experience and educational background.

Under the planned system, those holding less than university graduate degree will be given the rank of assistant teacher, while those aspiring to the rank of teacher will

need a bachelor's degree.

The first degree title will be given to teachers with five to six years of teaching experience and must have a master's degree, he added.

The specialised title will be granted to those with 15 years teaching experience who hold a Ph.D.

The system will be discussed soon by the Higher Council for Education, which is chaired by HRH Prince Ghazi Ben Mohammad.

Jaradat also said the ministry plans to introduce English as a second language at the elementary level instead of waiting for the preparatory stage. Private schools teach English as a second language from grade one.

The ministry also is planning to introduce French as a second language for secondary classes, but will not make the language course compulsory. At present, only some private schools teach French as a third language.

Jaradat denied that the ministry had shelved plans to gradually cancel the state's high school general certificate exam, known as the Tawjihi.

"We are studying the plan to develop the Tawjihi exams and all matters related to that will be discussed in the future meetings of the Higher Council."

The controversial plan was promoted by Education Minister Fawzi Gharabeh after he took the post in August.

He mentioned that the ministry may unify the academic stream; the scientific and literary streams for senior students.

World Bank records Dana's global importance in documentary

By Ahmad Khatib

AMMAN — The Dana Wildlife Reserve is to be featured in a documentary film highlighting a local NGO's endeavours to strike a balance between environmental preservation and sustainable development.

The Dana project, conducted by the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), has become an international model of integrated conservation and sustainable development since its inception in 1993.

A World Bank technical crew recently concluded a three-day shoot in the reserve, that grows in global importance every year.

Khaled Irani, director general of the RSCN, said, "[The World Bank] has been impressed with the achievements in Dana."

Dana, lying on the crest of the Great Rift Valley, is a 300-square-kilometre area of rugged landscape in Tafileh Governorate, about 50 kilometres north of Petra, and a two-hour drive south of Amman. It sweeps down a series of mountain ridges, from a 1,500-metre high plateau near Qasayyah area to the desert plains of Wadi Araba.

Steep wadis slice through the mountains, often lined

with a lush growth of trees and shrubs. Dana's geology is as varied as its landscape: It progresses from limestone to sandstone to granite, all carved and weathered by wind and water and flushed in pastel shades of pink, brown, and grey.

The Dana project is sponsored by the government, the RSCN, the World Bank, the United Nations Development

Programme and the Global Environment Facility — the funding mechanism under which the project was implemented.

Last May, the \$3.3 million reserve project caught the eye of the International Conservation Committee, which selected Dana out of 400 pilot projects, as an exemplary case study on integrated conservation and

biodiversity, community-based sustainable development, income-generation and tourism programmes.

The case study was examined then by a workshop organised in Washington in collaboration with a number of international conservation bodies such as the Economic Development Institute of the World Bank, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation, the International Union for the Conservation of Nature, and the World Bank's Common Property Resource Management Network.

According to the RSCN, the Dana project shows how such income-generating schemes can be used to help regulate damaging resource-exploitation practices and promote positive attitudes toward conservation initiatives.

It also underlined the benefits of institutional networking to enable community-based approaches to be effectively implemented and sustained.

When the project began, the RSCN found that in order to address problems between local communities and Dana, institutional changes had to be made at two main levels: at the site, with the development of income-generating activities for local people linked

to the protected area, and at the organisational level, with the restructuring of the RSCN to ensure it had the technical and financial capability to initiate and manage a community-based conservation programme.

The income-generating schemes introduced within and around the reserve were intended to provide local residents with financial and social benefits from the reserve and compensate for imposed restrictions such as grazing control.

The RSCN has included enterprises such as fruit drying and processing facilities, medicinal and culinary herb production, jewellery-making from local products and semi-precious stones and extensive tourism services.

The enterprises were developed with a strong emphasis on a marketing strategy that employed conservation philosophy and addressed the reserve as principal selling points of the newly-developed products and services.

The RSCN also created a hook to attract tourists to the reserve and consumers of Dana products: Services and products are "sold" on the basis that consumers can also play a role in protecting wildlife and supporting the local economy.

A new goat-raising

scheme aims to enable bedouin in the western part



of Dana to sell their animals at better prices.

After three years of operation, Dana income-generating activities have raised \$260,000 from sales and tourism receipts, created 38 new jobs and provided increased financial benefits to over 140 people, according to an RSCN report.

Income from tourism receipts in 1997 alone covered 60 per cent of the reserve's running costs. Seventy per cent of visitors were Jordanians.

Over the years, the RSCN has witnessed "a notable shift" in the attitude of local people towards the reserve,

revealing a much higher level of support and cooperation.

"The reason for adopting a market-led approach was to demonstrate to local communities that the nature reserve itself could provide the means to establish small businesses and generate employment opportunities that would supplement or replace subsistence farming and other income-generators they were engaged in before the reserve existed," the report read.

Last June, the 33-year-old RSCN, which manages 1,000 square-kilometre six nature reserves and plans to

set up another seven, complained that if the government reintroduces copper-mining in Dana's Wadi Faynan, which was a major copper-mining and smelting centres 6,500 years ago, the reserve will be "destroyed."

"The reintroduction of the copper mining is a big worry facing the reserve," a society representative said. "Non-sustainable copper mining in the area will destroy it forever."

In 1993, the government announced that it had no intention of mining the area, but some environmentalists said authorities have shown renewed interest.



5 tourists killed in rescue attempt in Uganda

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Five foreign tourists were killed and as seven others rescued Tuesday in an army operation to free at least 14 foreigners taken hostage by Rwandan Hutu rebels in southwestern Uganda.

Police in the Ugandan capital said the five tourists died when they were caught in an exchange of gunfire between the rebels and Ugandan army troops. The rescue operation was carried out Tuesday morning in a rain forest, police spokesman Eric Nalagambi told the Associated Press.

"Five tourists were killed in the crossfire during the rescue operation, and seven have been rescued," he said. Names and nationalities of the tourists were not immediately available.

He said the bodies were taken to Kambuga hospital in Rukungiri, a district in western Uganda.

Three Americans, six Britons, three New Zealanders, an Australian and a Swiss were among those kidnapped by the Congo-based rebels late Sunday at campgrounds on the edge of Bwindi National Park, known as the impenetrable forest, the starting point for visitors hoping to glimpse rare mountain gorillas.

The U.S. embassy in Kampala said it was told that six, not seven, of the western hostages had been released and that five bodies had been recovered. "Three people are still being held," said Sara Stryker, assistant political affairs officer.

She said officials were trying to establish the tourists' identities and notify their next of kin.

The Ugandan government imposed a news blackout on the situation Tuesday, and Defense Minister Stephen Kavuma said the government planned to read a statement to parliament later in the afternoon.

British and American diplomats planned to travel Tuesday to the campground where the tourists were taken. A British foreign office spokesman, speaking on customary terms of anonymity, did not detail what plans were for the diplomats' visit Tuesday.

Britain's Foreign Office said one of the Britons abducted also holds New Zealand citizenship.

The three New Zealanders captured were possibly travelling on British passports, said James Funnell, a spokesman for New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Australian officials said a man from Sydney was also among the hostages, and that four other Australians were kidnapped, but later released.

Michael Cook, British high commissioner in the former British colony, met with Ugandan minister of state Amama Mubambi Monday to discuss the kidnappings, the British Foreign Office spokesman said. He said that Britain was updating its travel advice, and warned against travelling to Uganda's border area with Rwanda and Congo.



Linda Adams from California, who escaped from the hands of her kidnappers in Uganda by pretending to be asthmatic, reacts to the news of the deaths of her fellow captives at Jomo Kenyatta Airport. The rebels killed five of the tourists, and seven others were rescued by police (Reuters photo)

Unconfirmed reports from private tour operators Monday said one tourist and two Ugandans had been killed in the kidnapping, one of them an employee of the state-owned Uganda wildlife authority. Details on the slain tourist were not known.

France's deputy ambassador to Uganda, Anne Peltier, was at the park when the rebels attacked and said she helped negotiate the release of nine other tourists.

"We were hearing a lot of firing all around the tent where we were sleeping, and suddenly some soldiers came in the tent and they

asked for money, for jewellery, for watches. They took everything... we had of some value," Ms. Peltier told Melbourne, Australia, Radio Station 3AW.

She said the camp tents were burned, so the people who were not taken hostage took refuge in a nearby village until police and the army arrived.

Among those who escaped was Elizabeth Garland, 29, an anthropology student at the University of Chicago. She spoke to her father, James Garland, Monday to tell him she was safe.

"She said she was awakened by gunfire all around

her and apparently a raid of 100 to 150 Hutu rebels came in armed and started taking hostages," James Garland said.

"She said they were looking specifically for Americans and would release hostages if they were not American or British."

Fighting between the Rwandan Hutu rebels and the Uganda people's defence forces continued Monday along the forested border.

The Hutu rebels fled Rwanda after they took part in a 1994 genocide of more than 500,000 minority Tutsis and politically mod-

erate Hutus. They have been crossing the border from bases in eastern Congo, often ambushing vehicles and kidnapping or killing the passengers to both Uganda and Rwanda.

In August, the rebels kidnapped four foreign tourists and seven Congolese guides and porters on a trek to observe the gorillas. They later released a Canadian tourist and all the Congolese escorts in exchange for the publication of a statement of their objectives.

The three other tourists — two Swedes and one New Zealander — have not been heard from since.

Hindu nationalists hope for miracle on crucial vote

NEW DELHI (AFP) — India's ruling Hindu nationalists, who face certain defeat in a parliamentary vote over a state's sacking, said Tuesday they still held out hope for a face-saving victory.

The nationalists also said they will launch a week-long "anti-betrayal" drive Wednesday to protest a move by the main opposition Congress Party to force the reinstatement of the sacked Bihar state government.

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party) scraped through with a majority of 29 votes in parliament's lower house during Friday's vote on last month's dismissal of the state government.

The BJP-led coalition government would have to repeat its performance in the upper house, where they clearly face defeat as the Congress vows to vote against a resolution seeking approval for the sacking.

Dates for the upper house vote are likely to be announced later this week.

The imposition of direct federal rule in Bihar, India's second most populous state, would be valid only if both houses of parliament approved the step.

Vajpayee's 11-month-old BJP-led government faces the humiliating prospect of seeing the sacked Bihar administration reinstated.

BJP spokesman Venkatesh Naidu said Tuesday however that the ruling coalition will not allow such a turn of events.

"We have various options before us," Naidu asserted and said the Hindu nationalists hoped for a miracle during the looming vote in the upper house, or the Rajya Sabha.

The BJP spokesman told reporters in the southern city of Madras.

"Between now and April 12 anything can happen," he said referring to the current session of parliament, which ends next month.

"The government is keeping its mind open," Naidu said. Speaking of the Congress, which initially backed the BJP on the Bihar state's sacking, Naidu said the Hindu nationalists will stage their week-long protest against the opposition party's U-turn.

"We will strike at the very roots of the Congress to expose their double standards," the BJP spokesman said.

The Congress Party itself had dismissed dozens of state governments when it was in power, Naidu argued.

"We now want to know what is the rationale behind the Congress not supporting the dismissal. We want to know why they favour the rule of jungle in Bihar," Naidu said.

The BJP had cited a breakdown in law and order as the main reason for imposing direct rule in the eastern state bordering Nepal.

Laloo Prasad Yadav, the charismatic chief of Bihar's sacked centrist RJD Party, has warned the BJP would be stripped of its dignity during the Rajya Sabha vote.

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee removed the Bihar government on Feb. 19, citing rampant crime following the massacre of 11 poor farmers by a private militia of landlords there.

The BJP was sure the move would be endorsed in both houses of parliament with the support of the Congress, which then vowed to kick out the resolution from the Rajya Sabha, where the BJP is outnumbered.

Hundreds of Indonesian settlers leaving East Timor

JAKARTA (AFP) — Hundreds of settlers from Indonesian provinces are pulling out of the troubled territory of East Timor amid growing expectations that it will opt for independence, reports said Tuesday.

Around 800 settlers packed a passenger ship from the provincial capital of Dili for Surabaya city and Jakarta Tuesday, the Suara Pamburuan evening daily said.

Monday cars and motorcycles laden with household goods formed a long line to a ferry sailing for northern Alor island in Maluku province, it said.

Several banks in Dili have seen a rush of panicky customers wanting to close their accounts, it added without giving figures.

East Timor governor Jose Abilio Soares had pleaded with settlers not to leave and assured them of their safety, the official Antara news agency said.

"Essentially there is nothing to be afraid of because security forces from the military and the police have anticipated all possible reactions," Soares was quoted by Antara as saying.

Abilio also pleaded to teachers, who are mostly migrants, not to leave East Timor, after a protest Sunday by 300 teachers at the Dili government sub-district office for lack of security for non ethnic-Timorese in the territory.

"It is time for us to talk after 23 years of argument by putting down the weapons and find what is

best for all East Timorese," Soares said.

Antara Sunday reported that up to 95 settlers from Indonesia's resort island of Bali had left East Timor for home.

Under a government "transmigration" programme, Jakarta has moved thousands of families from overcrowded areas on the islands of Java and Bali to less densely populated islands.

Also Sunday Antara reported some 300 trucks had been transporting the household goods of families fearful of independence for East Timor to neighbouring West Timor through the border town of Bobonaro.

Tensions have been rising in East Timor since Indonesia announced on

Jan. 27 that it would consider independence for the territory should its residents reject a broad autonomy offer. Groups in favour or against independence have been consolidating their forces.

Jakarta annexed East Timor in 1976 after the military invaded the former Portuguese colony the previous year. The U.N. and most other countries did not recognise the move and view Portugal as the official administrator in the territory.

The United Nations since 1984 has mediated talks between Indonesia and Portugal and the two sides are scheduled to meet in New York March 9 to finalise the autonomy offer.

Japan says time to make flag, anthem official

TOKYO (R) — Japan said Tuesday it will consider legislation to make the rising sun flag and a song that are both widely seen as symbols of the country's militarism its official flag and anthem.

"The time has come to fundamentally consider the status of the national flag and the national anthem as one of the conclusive points of the end of the 20th century," top government spokesman Hiromu Nonaka said.

The "hinomaru" (rising sun) flag and anthem have no legal or constitutional status as national symbols. The government has avoided legislating on the subject for fear of an all-out ideological confrontation.

The hinomaru, meaning "sun circle or emblem," with a red disc in the centre of a white field, has been used to identify Japan's merchant and official ships

since the eighth century.

But during the period of Japan's World War II military expansion into Asia, the flag was widely seen as a symbol of the country's militarism.

Ever more controversial, perhaps, is the slow anthem called "kimigayo", meaning "his majesty's reign", in which the words in ancient Japanese praise the emperor and hope his rule may last forever.

The government's controversial overture came two days after a high school principal in Hiroshima handed himself over what police believe was a disagreement over the singing of kimigayo at a graduation ceremony.

Toshihiro Ishikawa, 58, had been trying to persuade teachers to have students sing kimigayo at the ceremony, in line with orders from the education ministry in Tokyo.

A ministry directive on the issue has been criticised by a teachers' union as illegal.

The ministry said the rising sun flag is hoisted and the national anthem sung during graduation ceremonies at most Japanese schools.

The Japanese communists, who had been staunchly opposed any move to recognise the rising sun flag and the anthem, have recently changed their stance drastically on the issue.

"The problem is that the flag and anthem have been forced on Japanese citizens through customary use," Communist Party chairman Tetsuzo Fuwa told reporters Tuesday.

"The way to solve the issue is to pass laws on a national flag and an anthem," he said.

he forced on schools even if they were legally designated as such.

"People do not accept the hinomaru because of its history as an emblem of invasions by Japan... The kimigayo does not suit the system of the constitution, in which sovereignty resides with the people," Fuwa added.

Takenori Kanzaki, leader of the Buddhist-backed Komeito (clean government party), said his party would support the government's plan and said the rising sun flag and the kimigayo anthem no longer had any links with militarism.

The hinomaru is suitable as the national flag and the kimigayo anthem is also accepted by the Japanese people. They do not have any links to the revival of militarism," Kanzaki told reporters.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Yeltsin remains in stable condition, recovering in hospital

MOSCOW (AP) — President Boris Yeltsin was in stable condition and continued receiving treatment for a recurring ulcer that sent him to the hospital, his press centre said Tuesday. Yeltsin, 68, was hospitalised Saturday after complaining of stomach pains, only days after he had reportedly recovered fully from a bleeding ulcer. He spent two weeks in a hospital last month when the ailment first hit, and convalesced for another two weeks at a sanatorium. He had been noticeably more active in the last two weeks, making frequent trips to the Kremlin and meeting foreign leaders. Doctors said the heavier workload was in part to blame for the ulcer's recurrence. Doctors continued treating the president as planned Tuesday and said his condition was improving, a presidential spokeswoman said. This time around, he has been told to keep out of the office and get plenty of rest, and will likely remain in the hospital for a week. Yeltsin's ulcer is the latest in a long string of illnesses that have kept him sidelined for weeks at a time since he was reelected in 1996.

Japan minister draws fire for Schwarzenegger favour

TOKYO (R) — A government minister who flexed his muscles to let actor Arnold Schwarzenegger into Japan without a passport came under fire for his efforts in parliament Tuesday. Justice Minister Shozaburo Nakamura faced a barrage of criticism for failing to submit to authorities a report filed by Schwarzenegger asking for permission to enter Japan without a passport last October. Nakamura, whose ministry oversees immigration, admitted in parliament he had kept the form that Schwarzenegger filled out rather than forwarding it to the appropriate authorities. At the time of the incident, he reportedly joked that he would be in trouble with his wife and daughter unless he helped the famous actor. Pressed on the matter Tuesday, Nakamura admitted he and his family were fans of the star of such films as "Terminator", but he blamed the mix-up on his secretaries. "I told my secretaries to return the form (to the appropriate section), but they apparently forgot," the Mainichi Shimbun newspaper quoted Nakamura as saying. "I did not take it home," he was quoted as saying. The newspaper said Nakamura added: "The cabinet will check into this." Top government spokesman Hiromu Nonaka Tuesday called Nakamura's answers "unsatisfactory". Justice ministry officials said they had no comment. Schwarzenegger was in Japan along with director Steven Spielberg to attend groundbreaking ceremonies for a Universal Studios theme park.

UNHCR urges Germany to ease citizenship for refugees

BONN (AFP) — The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Tuesday urged Germany to make it easier for refugees to gain German citizenship. A statement from the UNHCR office in Bonn pointed out that, under draft legislation, only people with residence permits could request German nationality. Refugees who did not have the right of asylum in Germany but were allowed to remain under the terms of the Geneva convention would not qualify for citizenship as they did not have residence permits, the UNHCR said. The U.N. authority asked the federal and regional governments to modify draft legislation to make it possible for such refugees to become German citizens. German Interior Minister Otto Schily was scheduled to present a draft nationality code this month with a view to its adoption as law by the end of May. Germany received one-third of all asylum requests in the European Union last year, making it the biggest destination in Europe. Last month UNHCR chief Sadako Ogata criticised industrialised countries, especially in Europe, for pursuing overly restrictive refugee policies with a view to immigration controls and domestic security.

Police continue to hold 3 suspects, release 2 in Omagh bombing

DUBLIN (AFP) — Police continued to question three suspects Tuesday in connection with last year's deadly car bombing in Omagh, the worst single atrocity in the 30-year conflict over British-ruled northern Ireland. Two other suspects were released. Police in both parts of Ireland have been involved in an ongoing effort to secure charges against the Irish Republican Army dissidents responsible for the Aug. 15 blast that killed 29 people and wounded 370. More than 60 people have been arrested, but so far only one man has been charged in connection with the bombing. Arrests over the weekend and Monday brought to five the total number of people being interrogated by Irish police. However, by Tuesday morning, two of the suspects had been released. One was allowed to leave Monday night; the second was freed Tuesday morning. Under an Irish anti-terrorism law strengthened after the Omagh bombing, the suspects can be questioned for up to 72 hours before being charged or released. The dissidents responsible for the attack on the religiously mixed northern Ireland town broke away from the IRA following the outlawed group's July 1997 ceasefire. They oppose the decision of the IRA's allied Sinn Fein party to accept the Belfast peace accord of April 1998, which proposed creating a new Protestant-Catholic government for Northern Ireland, a state the IRA has traditionally sought to abolish.

Italian hospitalised for hallucinations after Internet spree

ROME (AFP) — An Italian who had spent the greater part of three days in front of a computer screen surfing the Internet has been hospitalised with hallucinations. La Repubblica reported Tuesday. The man, suffering from delirium and mental confusion, was being treated for "acute Internet intoxication," the newspaper said. It gave no further details. Rome psychiatrist Tonino Cantelmi said he believed several hundred people had overdosed on the net in the Italian capital alone. Most were aged around 30, single, educated and had never had any mental problems until they started spending more than 10 hours a day — between the office and home — on the computer. Cantelmi said. Anything over 5-6 hours a day on the Internet could constitute a danger to health, Cantelmi warned.



Cambodian U.N.'s Khme

Taking mixed from parents

Defence re manslaugh



Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen (centre), flanked by security, waves as he enters the National Assembly in Phnom Penh, on the first day of the resumption of parliament sessions. Cambodia's parliament opened debate Tuesday on forming a new senate body and completing the terms of last year's coalition deal between Hun Sen and arch rival Prince Norodom Ranariddh (AFP photo)

Cambodian government tight-lipped over U.N.'s Khmer Rouge recommendations

PHNOM PENH (AFP) — Cambodia's government was Tuesday remaining tight-lipped over a report by United Nations experts on whether to hold a tribunal for leaders of the genocidal Khmer Rouge.

The report, which the authors said was presented to Kofi Annan and the Cambodian government last week, could set in motion proceedings against leaders of the genocidal 1975 to 1979 regime recently welcomed here as defectors.

"We have no knowledge of the report and I don't know if he has received it," commented

Om Yienteng, a senior advisor to Prime Minister Hun Sen.

On his return from Tokyo Sunday, Hun Sen said he had yet to see the report, and added he was "too busy" to read it.

Hun Sen's coalition partner and parliamentary speaker Prince Norodom Ranariddh also Tuesday said he had also not seen the report, which contains conclusions from a visit by three international legal experts in November.

U.N. human rights officials said the Cambodian government would be given the report at least two weeks ahead of it

being released publicly, citing the sensitive nature of the prospect of a genocide trial.

The team of experts wrote the report following a formal plea to the U.N. made in 1997 by the then-co-premiers Hun Sen and Prince Ranariddh for an international tribunal for the Khmer Rouge leadership, whose 1975 to 1979 regime claimed up to two million lives.

However in December Hun Sen accepted the defection of two key architects of Pol Pot's regime, chief ideologue Nuon Chea and public face Khieu Samphan, who live alongside

Shuttle diplomacy resumes over Kosovo peace plan

BELGRADE (AFP) — Western officials resumed their shuttle diplomacy between Belgrade and Pristina Tuesday searching for a breakthrough on Kosovo before peace talks resume in France on March 15.

U.S. and the European Union special envoys for Kosovo, Christopher Hill and Wolfgang Petritsch, arrived in Belgrade Tuesday for a series of meetings with top officials on an outline peace plan for the troubled province.

Belgrade has rejected the deployment of an international military force in Kosovo, seen by Western powers as a key element of any peace plan for the province.

Hill and Petritsch, who together with Russian diplomat Boris Mayorski mediated marathon peace talks in Rambouillet, France, last month, met Monday with Kosovo political leaders and said they were well on track to approve the plan.

"Things are moving very positively," Hill said after a full day of meetings in Pristina with representatives of Kosovo Albanians.

But it remains to be seen whether Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's regime will accept a 28,000-man NATO peacekeeping force as part of the plan which will be discussed again in France later this month.

Kosovo Albanian leaders and Serb authorities managed to forge some common ground on a possible peace accord during the marathon peace talks at Rambouillet last month.

But they ran into a snag over U.S. and European insistence that a NATO force be deployed in Kosovo to separate the warring sides.

Serbia, the dominant part of rump Yugoslavia, insisted during 17 days of negotiations that it would never let NATO troops on its soil.

Organisation for Security

and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) chairman Knut Vollebæk, who met with Milosevic Monday, said the Yugoslav leader "flatly rejected" the presence of an international military force in Kosovo.

"I told Milosevic that ... it is difficult to see how we can implement the part of the agreement that the OSCE is supposed to implement without military support," Vollebæk said.

The OSCE's verification mission in Kosovo (KVM) was deployed in the province "to build confidence, to prepare for elections," Vollebæk said.

"We need to keep the two sides apart so that we can do this job. Although we have excellent people here they are unarmed verifiers and they will not be in a position to do that," he said.

Meanwhile the Kosovars are continuing what they call a period of "consultations" on the ground, including with the

Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) which is fighting for the independence of Kosovo's 90 per cent ethnic Albanian majority.

In Pristina, Adem Demaci, KLA's hardline political representative, told reporters he had resigned from the position. Demaci, a former longtime political prisoner, agreed on August 14 to be the KLA's political representative. But he refused to join the Rambouillet talks and moderate KLA members have increasingly distanced themselves from him.

Serb sources Tuesday reported fighting between Serb government forces and KLA rebels erupted in the southwest of the province.

They accused ethnic Albanians of attacking police and Yugoslav army units near Djeneral Jankovic, close to the border with Macedonia.

Despite Albright visit, China draws tough line on rights, Taiwan

BEIJING (AP) — Despite two days of often blunt talk by the U.S. Secretary of State, China gave no sign Tuesday it was prepared to compromise on human rights or a missile defence system for Taiwan.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao played down Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's criticisms of China's recent crackdown on political dissent, putting them down to cultural differences.

Zhu indirectly accused Washington of distorting North Korea's missile threat to drum up support for the theatre missile defence system and provide a pretext to make Taiwan a part of it.

"The current situation on the Korean peninsula on the whole is stable. Therefore we

oppose the moves by some countries to make an excuse of this situation to strengthen military alliances and to build up defense capabilities that exceed legitimate needs," Zhu told reporters.

"That is not conducive to peace and stability and may trigger arms races and do no good to no countries in the final analysis," he added.

In her meetings, Albright told Chinese leaders that deploying a missile defence system was years away. She urged them to improve relations with Taiwan and to persuade Beijing's Communist neighbour North Korea to stop developing missiles.

Zhu reiterated that for China, Taiwan remains the most sensitive issue in Chinese-U.S. ties.

Taiwan is regarded by

Beijing as a rebel province to be retaken by force if necessary, but for much of the cold war the island was a staunch U.S. ally. Despite switching diplomatic ties to Beijing 20 years ago, Washington is obligated by law to help Taiwan maintain an adequate defence.

Zhu warned that including Taiwan in a missile defence system or selling it other weapons "constituted a gross interference in China's internal affairs," he further accused Taiwanese leaders of attempting "to obstruct the reunification of the motherland" by seeking to join the defence system.

Controversies aside, Zhu tried to put an optimistic cast on preparations Albright and Chinese leaders made for Premier Zhu Rongji's April

visit to Washington.

He said the premier's trip, coming after the Washington and Beijing summits of the Chinese and U.S. presidents, was a chance to move relations ahead.

The spokesman attributed attempts to poison the atmosphere to "a small number of people in the United States."

"What they are doing does not serve the interests of the people of the two countries and are doomed to failure," he added.

During her meetings, Albright underscored to Chinese leaders that criticisms of China's human rights record and its huge trade surplus with the United States came from a broad bipartisan consensus "in Congress and the Clinton administration."

'Taking mixed blood Aborigines from parents was not genocide'

DARWIN, Australia (AFP) — Forcibly removing part-Aboriginal children from their families in the 1940s and 1950s was not genocide but a way to help them escape a pitiful existence, a court was told here Tuesday.

Aborigines Lorna Cubillo, 60, and Peter Gunner, 51, are suing the Australian government in a test case in which they claim damages for lifelong emotional damage they say resulted from being taken from their parents aged seven.

The federal court has heard the two still remember the trauma of being taken to institutions where they say they were beaten and sexually abused.

Legal experts say the case could pave the way to actions by an estimated 30,000 surviving victims of a policy practised by state and federal governments for almost a century up to the late 1960s.

Counsel for the Commonwealth, Douglas Meagher, QC, rejected claims the policy was an attempt at genocide.

"The genocide allegations made against this country are extremely serious and must be refuted," he

said.

Meagher said the aim was to help Aboriginal children by having them raised with white families or in state institutions because they were often treated as outcasts in their own communities.

"Half-caste children born to young Aboriginal women brought difficulties both to mother and child," he told the court.

"Mother and child in many instances were treated as outcasts as long as the child remained in the community."

"The lot of such children has from time to time been described as pitiful and indeed it was."

Meagher said most Aboriginal mothers voluntarily gave up their half-caste children to be brought up by the state.

"It's not surprising that the mothers, undoubtedly with great maternal reluctance, nevertheless thought that in the interests of the child that an institution was where the child should go."

He denied the institutions prevented the children seeing their parents.

"In all these institutions the

mothers were welcome to visit their children and in many cases the children returned home for the holidays," he said.

"It is regrettable that in all communities, of all colours ... of all heritages, of all backgrounds there are cases where parents abandon their children."

The court heard that Cubillo's removal from her community in 1947 was "shrouded in mystery", that she was an orphan at the time and there was no evidence she had been forced to leave her people.

Meagher said Gunner's mother had given permission for her son to be taken.

A 1997 Australian human rights commission report said the assimilation policy was a form of "genocide" and that victims should be compensated. The report listed physical and sexual abuse inflicted between the 1880s and 1960s on tens of thousands of Aborigines, some of whom were virtual slaves to white families.

The hearing continues Wednesday.

Pat Buchanan making third try for White House

MANCHESTER, New Hampshire (AP) — Pat Buchanan, the Conservative commentator whose low-budget, high-voltage campaigns shocked the Republican establishment in 1992 and 1996, is making a third run for the White House.

He was beginning Tuesday in New Hampshire, the first-in-the-nation primary state where he defeated eventual Republican nominee Bob Dole in 1996 and put a scare into President George Bush four years before that. His first campaign swing of the 2000 election will take him to 13 cities in 11 days.

Though Buchanan has been underestimated time and again, many Republican strategists believe he peaked in New Hampshire four years ago. A bustling field of like-minded candidates, a relatively late start and doubts about his electability work against Buchanan this time.

"I love Pat and agree with much of what he stands for, but I can't construct a scenario where he has a chance to win," said conservative leader Paul Weyrich, head of the Free Congress Foundation in Washington.

Buchanan, 60, took a leave of absence from CNN's "crossfire" to run. He told associates he is bored with the television business and believes the early Republican front-runners, Texas Gov. George W. Bush and Elizabeth Dole, are vulnerable.

Neither has formally entered the race.

Buchanan's target audience is blue-collar conservatives who share his opposition to abortion, free trade, immigration and the Washington establishment.

His tactic: galvanise voters and feed a hungry press corps, borrowing from his days as President Nixon's speechwriter to stitch together sound bites that incite and entertain.

Buchanan rallies "peasants with pitchforks," not simply voters.

Bad guys aren't just bad, they're "vandals and visigoths." And while others engage in studious ideological debates, this politician wages "cultural wars" and "religious wars," ever mounting and riding "to the sound of the guns."

Unlike his previous races, when Buchanan was the early alternative to the Republican front-runner, he will compete for the support of social conservatives against such names as former Vice President Dan Quayle, religious activist Gary Bauer, millionaire businessman Steve Forbes, New Hampshire Sen. Bob Smith and radio commentator Alan Keyes.

And while he weighed his options for 2000, Forbes, Bauer and Quayle attracted several members of the 1996 Buchanan team.

Republican consultant Eddie Mahe said Buchanan will further dilute the conservative constituency, leaving more breathing room for establishment candidates such as Bush and Dole.

Smith was the first candidate to formally enter the race.

Fellow Republican Lamar Alexander, who also ran in 1996, will declare his candidacy next week. Rep. John Kasich of Ohio and Sen. John McCain of Arizona will announce in the spring.

Vice President Al Gore and former New Jersey Sen. Bill Bradley are the only announced candidates for the Democratic nomination.



U.S. President Bill Clinton pauses after shopping in Dolly's Bookstore in Park City, Utah, where clerks refused to allow him to use his American Express card to pay for several books because it had expired. Clinton instead paid for his four books with cash (AFP photo)

Defence rests in marine pilot's manslaughter trial

CAMP LEJEUNE, North Carolina (AP) — Defence attorneys have rested their case after four days of testimony designed to show that a marine pilot flew his best before his jet severed a ski gondola cable in Italy, killing 20 people.

Closing arguments were possible late Tuesday.

Capt. Richard Ashby, 31, of Mission Viejo, California, is charged with 20 counts of involuntary manslaughter and one count each of destroying government property, dereliction of duty and improper flight planning.

Ashby was at the controls of the EA-6B Prowler when it hit the cable of the Mount Cernis ski gondola on Feb. 3, 1998, near

Cavalese, Italy. He faces a maximum prison sentence of 206 years if convicted of all charges.

Monday, the last defence witness narrated a computer simulation of the flight. Gan Wang of Cambridge Research Associates said the government's three sources of data used to plot the flight didn't show the same path. Two tracks actually showed the radar-jamming jet flying through a mountain.

Prosecutors, who presented 11 days of testimony, have questioned several witnesses about whether Ashby violated flight rules by not using a "hot mike", a voice-operated system that allows the pilot to talk to his crew without pressing the mike button.

But air crash investigator Jeff

Edwards testified Monday that the hot mike wasn't reliable and that the pilot could turn it off and easily press the mike button.

He also said his review of tests showed the jet's radar altimeter wasn't functioning.

In addition, a member of the marine investigation board testified that Ashby's superiors didn't provide all the navigation information he needed.

"The conduct of the flight with what was available to the air crew was very reasonable," said Col. Thomas Blickensderfer.

Prosecutors say Ashby was reckless and violated the mission's 517-mph (827-kph) speed limit and 600-metre altitude restriction. His jet cut a cable about 110 metres above the valley floor.

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Instilling a human rights culture

THE NATIONAL Task Force For Children has just commenced a nationwide media campaign on children's rights. The theme of the campaign, which is expected to run till the first week of June, is "We Work Together for the Rights of our Children," with the goal of increasing public awareness of children's rights. Part of the campaign is to hold a regional conference in March to further bolster children's rights as spelled out in national, regional and international conventions.

Yet we know that it is one thing to talk about children's rights and quite another to do something about them. The gap between rhetoric and actions is as wide as ever when it comes to the promotion and protection of human rights across the board. Unless and until there is a clear political will to translate the rights of the child into deeds, all campaigns to highlight such rights would remain in the realm of the abstract.

So where should action begin. Of course in the home. This is where the formative years of a child are spent and this is where the respect for the human rights of the child must start. This means that parents should already have an appreciation for the culture of human rights. If the adult world lacks a human rights culture, no amount of legislation, treaties or rhetoric would be able to lend support to the national, regional and international campaigns for greater protection of children's rights.

What we are trying to say in this context, is that we cannot separate children's human rights from the human rights of adults. The two sets of rights go hand-in-hand together and completely intertwined. So as we commend the National Task Force for Children for spearheading yet another campaign to enhance children's rights, we remind ourselves that another campaign for human rights for adults needs to run concurrently in order to truly help out our young people. No nation has been able to protect its children from abuses and exploitation without first improving its human rights record in general. It is a simple fact that children are protected best in countries with a good human rights profile.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Fahed Faneh said U.S. fighter planes are flying illegitimately over Iraqi territory while describing the country's reaction against such attack as "provocation." Faneh quoted President Bill Clinton as saying how sorry he felt about the strikes and how he wished that Iraq would stop its provocation and allow the UNSCOM inspectors to return. Clinton also said, according to Faneh, that the U.S. has proven that it never meant to harm Iraqi civilians. However, said Faneh, human rights organisations have revealed that last January's death toll in Iraq was "terrifying." Does Clinton believe that the Iraqi people only need food and medicine, and what does he say about banning civil aviation between Baghdad and Amman? asked the writer.

Al Dustour's Mazen Saket commented on the two-day holiday saying that it seems that the government has almost approved the issue. Saket said this system of working hours and holidays has been adopted in most developed countries in accordance with their economic and social reality as well as their capabilities. Is this holiday going to positively reflect on a Jordanian's productivity or at least preserve current levels, and how will the long working hours affect women labour? asked the writer. Saket said total refusal was the first reaction among women working in banks, so is the intention to ban them from working outside their homes or to change the nature of the Jordanian family? Taking a decision on this topic requires a comprehensive study of Jordan's social and economic reality, said Saket.

Washington Watch

Mideast must be forced on agenda of 2000 U.S. elections

Dr. James J. Zogby

WITHOUT ORGANISED political intervention by an Arab American-led coalition in the 2000 U.S. presidential election, there will almost certainly be no substantive discussion of U.S. Middle East policy.

The reason is not, as some might suggest, that the U.S. public has no interest in foreign affairs. And this silence is definitely not because U.S. Middle East policy is such a smashing success story. In fact, there has been a succession of largely unresolved crises in the Middle East that have consumed every U.S. administration and U.S. policy maker during the past 25 years.

During that period, the United States has sent more troops, sold more weapons, lost more lives, spent more money on foreign aid and had more vital national security interests at stake in the Middle East than in any other region of the world. And yet, despite this substantial investment, fundamental problems have not been solved and the Middle East remains a tinderbox ready to explode. But even with all of these problems and dangers, U.S. Middle East policy will not be subjected to scrutiny nor will candidates for the presidency debate these issues, unless they are forced to do so by external pressure.

The reason for this is quite simple. There has been, up until now,

an asymmetry of power in U.S. politics, so that for years pro-Israel political pressure has not only driven the policy debate but has dictated the parameters of allowable discussion.

Candidates for public office, therefore, have not evaluated Middle East policy in terms of success or failure, or protecting U.S. interests or promoting human rights. In U.S. politics, the Middle East has been a question of domestic politics. When weighing Middle East issues or policy options candidates and their advisors do not ask "will this work, or serve U.S. interests or make people's lives better?" rather they ask "will this hurt or help our campaign with money and votes?" or "will this provoke protest?" In the end, if the policy options considered will make the pressure groups happy and be ignored by the press and larger public, then it can be considered a desirable action to take irrespective of its merit with regard to the region or U.S. interests. The damage done to the region and to U.S. policy by this political behaviour has gone well beyond the denial of Palestinian rights.

Israel's supporters have attempted to shape the entire Middle East debate to force the United States view of broader Arab issues through an Israeli lens.

As a result a clear double stan-

dard has emerged in the way the United States has implemented its policy. Israel's supporters in Congress will force issues to the forefront that even undercut an administration's modest efforts to achieve some balance in their approach to the Arab World. Recently, Congress has even taken steps that have hurt the peace process. On other occasions they have taken punitive measures against a number of Arab and Islamic governments and even taken provocative jabs at U.S. Arab allies in order to embarrass them. All the while Congress continues to provide Israel extraordinary amounts of aid and benefits while shielding it from scrutiny and criticism.

While the prospects for change appear to be hopeless when looked at from the perspective of politics in Washington, there are significant changes taking place in U.S. public opinion that can be mobilised in a national election. This could create a new dynamic that could help force a change in the Middle East debate.

If left alone, the situation will most certainly not change. Candidates will respond only to the pressure they feel and the public will not rise up spontaneously to demand a new direction in U.S. Middle East policy. If left alone, any political discussion of the Middle East by candidates will

only occur within the parameters allowed by pro-Israel forces. For example, conservative right-wingers and some "liberals" might seek to challenge the current Administration's position on Middle East issues by chiding them for not moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, not doing enough to remove Saddam, not doing enough to stop terrorism or being "too soft on Arafat." In other words, what is allowable is to be more hard-line than the current U.S. policy. What is not allowable is to criticise current U.S. policy for already being too pro-Israel. Even though public opinion polls are showing that most Americans have developed a more balanced view of Middle East issues than the current policy debate would reflect, the public does not challenge this nonsense, they tune it out.

The only way to move the debate forward is an intensive mobilisation effort to galvanise public opinion on a few critical Middle East issues — where U.S. interests are directly at stake — to organise this opinion and to bring it into the electoral process to directly challenge the candidates and the press to be accountable for their policy decisions. In 1988 we undertook such an effort. We organised Arab Americans and other allies to run as delegates to Democratic and Republican political party conven-

tions across the United States. In ten states we had elected a sufficient number of delegates to pass resolutions at the conventions calling for "Palestinian Statehood."

In addition, in Iowa, the home of the presidential year's first contest, we organised demonstrations against presidential candidates who refused to condemn Israel's brutal crackdown on the "intifada." After a few weeks, national news reporters who had witnessed our demonstrations began to ask the candidates to comment on our demands. Before long questions regarding our concerns were being asked of the candidates during their pre-election debates. By the time we reached the National Democratic Convention, our effort, which had its home in Jesse Jackson's presidential campaign, had amassed enough strength to pass a number of platform planks on Middle East issues and to hold the first ever national debate on Palestinian rights in the heart of the Democratic convention. Such a debate is, I believe, desperately needed this year as well. The candidates and parties must be challenged, the public must be mobilised and the "deadly silence" that has stifled discussion of U.S. Middle East policy must be ended. It can be done. But I believe it will only be done if Arab Americans lead the way.

Israel's elections set unique precedents

By Kenneth W. Stein

ISRAEL'S ELECTION campaign for the 15th Knesset and prime minister is like none other in Israel's history. Barring an unlikely war with the Arab World or some heinous physical violence perpetrated against Israelis, the dominant election issue will not be the Arab-Israeli peace process. The election will be a referendum on economic promises not kept, wrenching domestic and social issues, the incumbent prime minister's style, and an across the board decline in foreign relations. There are other firsts.

Tones and pace for managing relations with the Arab World differ, but Likud, Labour, and centrist party leaders reflect similar basic views: the West Bank and Gaza will be shared with the Palestinians, a way needs to be found to leave southern Lebanon quickly, negotiations with Syria should be restarted, and Israel must retain security control over Jerusalem as an undivided city.

A gnawing 9 per cent unemployment rate persists; Israel's annual growth rate has slowed from 6 per cent to 2 per cent annually. A suddenly antagonistic segment of the ultra-orthodox community has openly slandered supreme court justices and challenged the legitimacy of the secular supreme court to

make judgements it believes are heavenly defined. A burning anger envelops many Israelis because while their daughters and sons do obligatory army service, exemptions are easily obtained for students who are engaged in religious study. Matters of rabbinical control over civil procedure — divorce, inheritance, marriage — so long bubbling beneath the surface have erupted with unrestrained passion. Israel's diplomatic relations with Europe, many Arab and Muslim states, and with the United States have deteriorated since Bibi Netanyahu's election in May 1996.

Several months prior to Israel's last election, four bombs were exploded by Palestinian extremists. They severely hurt the election chances of Shimon Peres, the incumbent Labour Party prime minister. So far, neither the Palestinian community nor other Arab states have done or said much to influence Israeli voters. Arafat has suddenly grown speechless about declaring an independent state on May 4, 1999. He does not want to create anxiety among Israeli voters, though he may not be able to control an outbreak of violence or attacks against Israelis. In the days and months prior to the 1988, 1992, and 1996 Israeli elections, when such dreadful acts occurred, the incumbent in office was blamed. Approximately 4.5 million

Israelis are eligible to vote in the May 17 elections. Again, as they did for the first time in the 1996 elections, Israeli voters will cast separate ballots for prime minister and for their favourite political party list. For example, it is possible for someone to vote for the Labour Party but also vote for Bibi Netanyahu as prime minister. All polls indicate that none of the major party candidates for prime minister will receive the absolute majority needed to avoid a run off. Therefore, this will likely be Israel's first election where the parliamentary election results are known before the prime minister is chosen. In essence, the campaign, conducted for the scheduled May 17 Knesset election, may differ dramatically in content and tone in the run-off election for prime minister scheduled for June 1.

Any party that receives 1.5 per cent of the total vote will be represented in the parliament; in the last elections it took approximately 19,000 plus votes for a party to secure a seat in the 120-member parliament. In the 1996 elections, there were more than a dozen parties that presented party lists for the Knesset; so far more than 30 parties have registered to participate in the May 17 elections.

This is the first Israeli election in which a major party prime ministerial candidate, Yitzhak Mordechai, is of Sephardi (Iraqi) Jewish origin.

Across the political spectrum, political parties have dispatched women politicians and elevated fresh candidates to higher positions on party lists. In the run up to the 1996 elections at least three would be prime ministerial candidates, Rafael Eitan, David Levy, and Ariel Sharon withdrew their candidacies and were co-opted by the Likud Party; parties have until March 30 to adjust their party lists, so additional mergers can be expected. After that, the real campaigning begins.

More than any other prime minister in Israel's history, the performance record, leadership style, and character of the sitting prime minister is a principal issue in this campaign. Netanyahu has been as scrutinised, vilified, and jostled by all shades of the Israeli media. His leadership style has significantly influenced political party formation. Former ministers are running against him: former Science Minister Beni Begin is heading his own right-wing party, former Defence and Finance Ministers Mordechai and Meridor have established their own centrist party, and former Foreign Minister Levy is poised to join the Labour Party.

Unprecedented possibilities exist because the parliament will be elected on May 17 but perhaps not the prime minister. The campaign for the Knesset is likely to be more issue oriented; if there is a run-off

for prime minister, it will be laden with nasty personal accusations. Its central theme is likely to be: Do you want four more years of Netanyahu?

In the two weeks between the Knesset election and the run-off, a particular candidate for prime minister could indicate the names of ministerial appointments in his proposed cabinet. A sophisticated Israeli electorate will do their own math and generate permutations for who will lead what ministry. With issues of religion and state increasingly acrid, the prime ministerial candidate who promises appointments that will limit or expand religious influence over daily life could sway voters. Verbal promises made to constituencies like the Russian immigrants, Israeli Arabs, or others could also make a difference in the outcome. For the first time the Israeli voter may be able to analyse and evaluate the proposed governmental teams and their promises, and then choose an appropriate political quarterback.

The writer is the William E. Schatten Professor of Contemporary Middle Eastern History and Israeli Studies at Emory University. His next book, *Heroic Diplomacy: Sadat, Kissinger, Carter, Begin and the Question for Arab-Israeli Peace* will be published by Routledge this summer.

Letters to the editor

Don't expect miracles

TIME SWINGS by so fast. So fast that we can't achieve what we want for our future. People are waiting for a miracle to happen. They think that our new King has a hidden treasure to pass along to each and everyone of us that he has a magic wand to wave and change the universe into a more suitable and comfortable place for all of us to live in.

Well, wake up everyone and smell the roses. There is no treat, treasure, or magic wand that His Majesty can use. We the people have the power to change our lives. If you are willing to give only then will you receive. By sitting on your backside you will achieve zilch. To speculate about the future when you are not doing anything towards making it better is a waste of your time.

The late King Hussein always referred to us as the "Jordanian family." We believed that (Jordanian family) embodied other variables that make up the family infrastructure. Some of the ideals it includes are cooperation, self-sacrifice, ethics, morals, high standards, integrity, principles and contributions from each and every member of the "Jordanian family."

In other words our new beloved King Abdullah will not be performing miracles solving our problems. We must, as any family unit, make a contribution towards our future. Then and only then will we feel that we have earned the title given to us as a "Jordanian family." A strong and united Jordan requires a strong commitment from us all.

Jane Judeh
 Amman

A decade of peace

IN EVERY country in the world, there are children silently suffering the consequences of violence, causing enormous harm and suffering to children at every level of society.

This violence takes many forms. Between children themselves, on the street, at school, in the family and in the community. There is physical violence, psychological violence, socio-economic violence, environmental violence and political violence. Many children — too many children — live in a "culture of violence."

All human rights reject violence and endeavour to prevent conflict by tackling its root causes to solve problems through dialogue and negotiation guaranteeing for all the full exercise of their rights and the means to participate

freely in the development of their society.

The international community with the support of more than forty countries has adopted a resolution to make the year 2000 an "International Year for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence" and the first decade of the next century (2001-2011) the "International Decade for Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World."

This is an international decade for peace and non-violence for the children of the world. It is the beginning of a new Millennium. Let's assist the efforts of the international community to foster peace, harmony, respect for human rights, democracy and development throughout the world.

Mohammad Abu Jaber
 Non-Violence Group
 Tel/Fax: 5682243
 Amman

Legacy of a safe haven

AS WE reach the end of the millennium, we still witness in many parts of the world human rights activists striving to secure the very basic human rights of civic equality and end to racial discrimination.

In Jordan, at the dawn of the 20th century, peaceful coexistence and equality among its inhabitants of different descents was and still is manifest in an environment led by a very humane regime. This reality cannot be better supported than by those Jordanians of Armenian origin who were fortunate enough to find themselves in a country very poor in tangible resources yet a safe haven in a time when human suffering prevailed worldwide.

Under wise leadership, Armenians' civic rights were immediately safeguarded and continued to witness a life of tolerance, coexistence and diversity which was further consolidated during the reign of His Majesty King Hussein. The King who embodied these values and represented safety and secure shelter for all Jordanians of Armenian origin. This is a reality which must contribute to enhancing the human rights record of Jordan.

My late father Manuel Mentzbagopian, who served as Mayor of the Armenian Community in Jordan in general and the Catholic Armenian Community in particular during 1952-1998, spent his lifetime like every Jordanian citizen of Armenian origin, keeping a low profile for he opted to reciprocate the humane reception he received over the

years by both the Jordanian people and the Hashemite leadership. His belief was that a modest king like King Hussein deserves at least to be served with modesty.

King Hussein has joined his Creator the Almighty, and we are most confident that His Majesty's legacy of coexistence, tolerance, religious and racial diversity will live on under the leadership of His Majesty King Abdullah II. May the soul of King Hussein be ever blessed by Divine Providence.

Madline Mentzbagopian (Nizbakobian) and family
 Jubeiha

Letter of condolence

WE WANT to express our deepest sympathies at the passing away of His Majesty King Hussein. Like you, we also feel deep sorrow at the loss of such a great leader, king, visionary and caring man of love and peace.

We hold in highest regard His Majesty's achievements in Jordan and his tremendous efforts for humanity in the region and throughout the world.

We pray for the strength of Jordan, for His Majesty King Abdullah, and for the leadership of the country. We pray for the comfort of all the Jordanian family. We hope that we can all forge ahead with courage and trust for the future, as King Hussein taught us through his example of love, humility and faith in God.

As King Hussein has now gone on to his heavenly reward, we pray that his influence will continue to live on in all of our hearts to help guide us in the ways of peace and love.

We were very touched to see that even in his death so many people and nations were brought together. With you, we hope that in our small way we can follow his example to help the needy and to further the cause of peace and love in the world.

We offer our heartfelt condolences and prayers.

The Family International
 P.O. Box 921857
 Amman

China's spoilt little emperors

Twenty years ago Peking launched its one child family policy. Result: 65 million pampered only children

By Teresa Poole

I'VE HEARD that when they first go to university, some only children can't do anything, even wash their own clothes," said 20-year-old Li Yuening, an undergraduate at Tianjin city's Nankai University. "But if their parents have been educated, they won't spoil their child so much."

Her classmate, Liu Lu, 19, agreed: "In most one-child families, the parents lived through the Cultural Revolution. They lost so much during that period that they want to regain it all through their child. So they sometimes spend too much money, and maybe it makes the child a little selfish."

These two young women, both only children, are the product of one of the most brutal exercises in social engineering ever seen. Two decades ago, in 1979, the Chinese Communist Party launched its controversial "one-child-family" policy. In total, China now has 65 million only children, almost all of whom live in urban areas, where the "one child policy" has meant just that.

The first only children born under this regime — such as Li and Liu — have now reached adulthood. Meanwhile, the younger generation growing up in China is characterised as pampered and spoilt "Little Emperors."

In rural areas, home to 70 per cent of Chinese, the policy since the mid-Eighties has increasingly allowed a second child, particularly if the first was a girl. But the traditional desire for sons and large families remains stubborn.

As the old saying puts it: "A married daughter is like splashed water" — i.e., a waste (female infanticide always was a problem in imperial China). Family planning rules have exacerbated this age-old preference for male offspring, assisted by ultrasound technology and selective abortion. The result is an unnaturally high proportion of baby boys, building a store of social pressures for the future.

There is much debate inside China on all these questions. It is also difficult to separate the impact of mandatory family planning from the sweep of economic and social reforms during the same 20-year period. For instance, almost any child growing up now, with or without siblings, is massively spoilt compared to youngsters before 1979.

The Chinese government claims that the population is 300 million lower

than it would have been without the one-child policy, although part of that trend would have occurred anyway with economic development. The steepest decline in the crude birth rate in fact took place before the policy was introduced, falling from 33.4 per 1,000 in 1970, to 18.25 in 1978, and 16.57 in 1997. If you look at the average number of children a woman bears, this fell from 5.8 in 1970, to about 1.9 nowadays (with the figure for urban residents below 1.3).

That still leaves more than 20 million babies born each year in China, and China's population, now 1.3 billion, is forecast to peak around 2050 at 1.6 billion. By then, the second major impact will be evident: a quarter of China's population will be over 60 years-old — hence the urgency of developing the country's nascent pensions and social insurance system.

By that time, the imbalance in the rural sex ratio may also have caused problems, as tens of millions of Chinese farmers fail to find wives. When Nature is left to herself, 106 boys are born for every 100 girl babies.

According to Chinese figures, the sex ratio for first-born babies is basically normal, but rises alarmingly with each subsequent child: 121:100 for second-borns, 124 for third-borns, and 131 for fourth babies, according to the 1990 census.

"For the later babies, they know they have to pay a fine," said Xie Zhenming, at the China Population Information & Research Centre, "so they don't want to leave things to chance." (This is not true in ethnic minority areas, such as Tibet, where there is no bias against girl babies.)

Xie's survey of Zhejiang province, in east China, highlighted the social reasons for the imbalance between the number of girls and boys. In the north, well-developed co-operative industries were able to provide pensions, health care, and even funeral costs to support the elderly without sons. In the south there was no such provision, agricultural work needed men, and the social pressures to continue the family line were much stronger.

While the Chinese countryside is mired in traditional prejudices, China's cities are awash with well-dressed, doted-upon only children — and no one seems sure whether this is good or bad. At Nankai University, a group of eight students, all only children from various cities, took umbrage at the general notion that their generation would exhibit problems, compared with children with

siblings.

"We do not feel any obvious differences between us," said 20-year-old Ji Fei. (For this Nankai year, about half are only children.) "Some people say the only child sometimes does not know how to care about other people's feelings. All of us know how to care about others, to be tolerant, to be loving." Zhao Xiaoyu, 20, added: "Only children long for communication with others, because when they are young, they feel alone." Even the shock of the six-person dormitories, after a childhood with the luxury of their own bedrooms was bearable, they said. "We have no choice, so we must get used to it and find interest in it," said 19-year-old Nie Ting.

China's generation of urban only children do not seem to revel in their singular position. "I would have liked a brother or a sister, it would have been interesting," said Siquing Gao, 20, at Nankai. "I want to have a brother, because if he is older he can protect me, and if younger I will not feel lonely. And when I go to college, my younger brother would stay with my parents," said Nie.

These young adults were raised before China's 1990s boom, so their parents had less opportunity to lavish them with material goods. On the train back to Peking, I met four Chinese boys on a school trip, all only children aged between 11 and 13, from the north-east city of Jinzhou. Did they ever feel they were spoilt? "Yes," they chorused, gleefully. "Whatever is good to eat, my mother gets for me," said 12-year-old Zhang Xi, who was at least two stone overweight. Here, perhaps, were some of China's famed "Little Emperors," whose parents had just spent about two weeks' average wages sending their precious ones on a four-day educational visit to Tianjin and Peking.

China's government is well aware of the potential social pitfalls of its family planning policy, but also points to some obvious advantages of being an only child. Fu Zongbi, a family education expert at the Women's Federation, said: "The family is better off and they can devote more resources to an only child. The only child has a wider range of knowledge and a higher level of intelligence. The parents have enough time and energy to spend on education for the kids." Since the early 1980s, China has run parenting classes for adults, with emphasis in the cities on how not to spoil only children, but also on not overloading them with pressure to perform.



A young Chinese girl gets the royal treatment as she and another child are trotted around a Beijing park in a sheep-drawn buggy. Since China adopted its one-child policy some two decades ago, Chinese parents have pampered their single children with so much affection and indulged their fondness for junk food that a new breed of spoiled and overweight children, called the new 'little emperors,' has parents spending all their time and money to keep them happy (AFP photo)

Plenty of other, bigger, surveys point to a more complicated picture. Materially-speaking, spending on children is certainly huge, accounting for up to one-third of total family income in the big cities.

A study of middle-school students in Hubei province found that at kindergarten and primary school, only children were mentally and physically superior to those with siblings, but that their behaviour was worse. However, by middle school, those differences in character had disappeared. On psychological ratings, against expectations, loneliness was more of a problem among those with siblings.

Part of the reason may be that Chinese urban children often attend full-time kindergarten from as young as three years old. Older urban children are also routinely sent to summer camps or quasi-military training. Luo Xubin, at the Young Pioneer Centre's Department of Social Activity, said:

"Last summer, we organised 300 or 400 children from Peking to go to a military base in Hebei province. That was a kind of hardship camp. At the base, the children learned to take care of their daily life, the dormitory, bad military training, held bonfire parties, and fished in the streams. It lasted five days. Getting out of the family, the children could use their own initiative."

The more worrying social problem probably comes from the huge pressure which parents these days put on their only children. Fu quoted a survey in counties and towns in Jiangsu province which found that one-third of five-year-olds were already learning musical instruments, something which Chinese parents believe will increase their child's intelligence. In Peking, at the China Children's Centre, which is run by the Women's Federation, expensive piano lessons are on offer. "We have several hundred

students learning the piano," said one staff member. "If the parents keep coming with the child, then the child continues to learn... However, more than half drop out after one or two years."

A little-known fact is that, under China's family planning rules, these only children, if they marry another only child, will be permitted to have two children.

Cong Jun, a senior official at the State Family Planning Commission, whose only child is now 21, said: "We find that when our people are better educated, they tend not to have children at all. It's a change of attitude to marriage and child-bearing. The young people in the cities now, a lot of them do not want to have any children. 'But I can tell you, I really want to have two grandchildren!'"

— The Guardian

Japanese fund trips to sex shops

By Sachiko Kinoshita
Agence France Presse

A JAPANESE scheme to rescue the economy with a multi-billion-dollar shopping voucher give-away is inadvertently funding free trips to sex shops, industry members said Monday.

The unintended side-effect of the government scheme has been welcomed by some sex industry workers. But at least one local authority has now banned use of the coupons in red-light districts.

Shops authorised to accept the coupon display a special "approved by the city office" sticker issued by the local authority.

"Yes, we've got it (the sticker)," said the manager of Marine Boy, a gay sex shop in the busy Tokyo district of Shinjuku.

"I don't expect to get good sales from it. I just want the publicity because I heard that several other sex shops had applied for it. I thought why not?" he added.

At a nearby sex massage parlour, the assistant manager said on condition of anonymity: "We applied for it and we got a sticker from Shinjuku ward. We will accept the coupon from today."

This wasn't quite the result expected when the novel scheme to stimulate stagnant domestic demand was launched this year, giving coupons worth a total 20,000 yen (\$173) for each eligible person.

The coupons, each worth 1,000 yen, are issued by local governments with their own designs — some with cartoons and others more formal — under a government scheme worth a total 770 bil-

lion yen.

They go to households with children aged 15 or younger and to bed-ridden and low-income people aged 65 or older — a total of about 35 million people — and must be spent in the local area within six months.

An official of the Shijuku ward authority said stickers authorising use of the shopping coupons had been sent to 7,000-to-8,000 shops.

"Basically we gave each shop (that applied) a sticker. We don't know how many sex shops applied... but I am sure there are some. We don't discriminate if an applicant owns a sex service shop."

Likewise in Tokyo's Toshima ward, a local government official said the authorising stickers had been issued to 5,700 shops for its coupons, which are to be distributed March 10.

"I'm sure it must include some sex shops," he said.

But the authorities of western Tokyo's Taitoh-Ku ward have clamped down on the sex industry, banning the use of coupons in its historic red-light district of Yoshiwara.

"The coupons are supposed to lighten the economic burden for residents. Sex shops and the sex industry are not suitable places to use them," said a Taitoh official.

Analysts have derided the shopping coupon scheme as a desperate attempt to save the economy, saying people will simply use the vouchers and save the cash they would otherwise have spent.

Legendary swindler inspires chaotic Russia

By Adam Tanner
Reuters

SEVENTY YEARS after he first made his mark as a fast-thinking swindler, Ostap Bender is alive and well, at the heart of a long series of dubious deals and outright theft that have flourished in post-Soviet Russia.

When millions of Russians lost their money in pyramid schemes in the early 1990s, Ostap was there. When the government defaulted on its bonds last year, Ostap laughed at how easily investors were fooled. When the West saw much of its food aid stolen in 1992-93, Ostap marvelled at how simple it was.

The exploits of the dashig but touchingly naive con-artist, who travelled through far-flung Russian towns and villages artfully ripping off the locals, made the 1927 novel "The Twelve Chairs" one of Russia's best-loved books.

Yet these days he has become more than just a character from fiction.

To many Russians, the spirit of Ostap Bender is the driving force behind the country's "Wild West" capitalism.

The book by satirists Ilya Ilf and Yevgeny Petrov, in which Ostap searches for diamonds stashed inside one of a set of 12 missing chairs, serves as a sort of guidebook to Russia today.

"Ostap Bender is kind of a symbol of this anarchy and will to survive," Boris Fyodorov, a former deputy prime minister and chief tax collector, told Reuters.

Fyodorov estimated that all but one per cent of Russians, following Ostap's tradition, try to skirt the rules.

In the novel, Ostap bunts down the chairs one by one using a mixture of charm and deceit. His ultimate goal is to get enough money to go to Brazil — although he never makes it that far.

The book is set during the period of the new economic policy (NEP) in the 1920s, a brief and rambunctious experiment with capitalist policies that followed the Bolshevik revolution.

"It's basically about an adventure in a free country, and that's why it was so popular during the Soviet times," said Fyodorov, whose 1998 efforts to boost tax collection fell victim to well-respected traditions of deceiving the government.

The post-Soviet privatisation of public assets provided similar opportunities to follow Ostap's adage of "respecting the criminal code" while exploiting loopholes and human weaknesses for self-gain.

"We can see this character especially in the period of turmoil and upheaval when there are more opportunities to express yourself," said book publisher Igor Zakharov.

Grigory Yavlinsky, a candidate for president in the 2000 election and head of the liberal Yabloko Party, said the vasi web of lingering Soviet ways made Ostap-style cons easy.

"The book of Ilf and Petrov is about the absurdity of the previous system, and the previous system is still in place," he said in an interview. "While the Soviet system is in place, Ostap Bender is still in place." The government's major effort to undo the Soviet system — privatisation — mobilised a new army of Ostaps as well-connected insiders snapped up state assets at often ridiculously low prices. A new class of Russian "oligarchs" was born.

Ordinary Russians, meanwhile, received privatisation vouchers which privatisation mastermind Anatoly Chubais promised would be worth as much as a car. Some swapped them for a bottle of vodka. Others put them in big-talking investment funds which collapsed, leaving them without enough to buy even tyres.

The widespread corruption and shady deals that rose in the era of privatisation have prompted some sociologists to describe Russia as a kleptocracy, or "government of thieves".

The big con Ostap is not above using charitable fund-raising for his own gain, a type of scheme that is practised far and wide today.

In the novel, he gathers some well-off townspeople for a secret meeting of the "union of the sword and plough". Using hints of an anti-government conspiracy, he raises significant sums for homeless children. He promptly pockets the cash.

These days some charitable organisations for athletes and Afghan war veterans have won similar reputations by using tax breaks on imported cigarettes and liquor.

The "union of the sword and plough" episode also contains another familiar theme. Ostap promises "the West will help us."

"This belief, as Ostap Bender said, that 'the West will help us' that there will be Western investment and enrichment —

'The widespread corruption and shady deals that rose in the era of privatisation have prompted some sociologists to describe Russia as a kleptocracy, or 'government of thieves'

there won't be anything of the kind," Deputy Atomic Energy Minister Bulat Nigmatulin told a recent news conference.

"Imagine that you had \$1 million. Would you really bring them here with the risk of losing them?" Yet the West did invest, lend — and has yet to recover — tens of billions of dollars in Russia in the 1990s.

Yavlinsky credited Chubais, who in 1998 was Russia's chief loan negotiator, with Ostapian talents in winning billions in International Monetary Fund loans last summer.

"Maybe Ostap Bender is a good example to explain the relations between Chubais and the IMF," he said.

Billions of dollars in loans had melted away by last August when the government defaulted on its GKO treasury bills and devalued the rouble. Much of the banking system became insolvent, parting millions of Russians from their funds.

"It was the government that was playing

the game of Ostap Bender and not the banks," said Vyacheslav Nikonov, head of the Politika Fund, a think tank. "The reaction was 'what could you expect from the government or the banks?'" Much as the government with its high-yielding T-Bills, Ostap also promises easy wealth to the citizens of Noviy Vasyuki.

Posing as a chess grandmaster, he said he would organise an "inter-planetary chess congress" in their backwater town. When he is unmasked — Ostap can barely play chess — he ridicules the locals for their naive trust; a humiliation 1998 depositors felt when their banks froze their accounts.

"Fools," Ostap told an angry crowd as he escaped. "I don't think that a chess grandmaster would visit such idiots as you." Showing that Ostap has penetrated the minds of the highest ranks in the government, Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov recalled the chess scene in televised comments this month while calling for an orderly parliamentary election later this year.

"During the election campaign let's move the pieces on the chessboard. It would be worse if you stand up and, like Ostap Bender perhaps, throw the chessboard at the head of your opponent sitting opposite you," he said.

Such brazenness, combined with a considerable capacity to charm, has made Ostap a beloved figure, especially those who came of age during the Soviet era.

One fan is Kirsan Ilyumzhinov, governor of the tiny southern region of Kalmykia and head of the International Chess Federation, who has set up an entire region called "City Chess" with a complex for chess tournaments. Ilyumzhinov proudly nicknamed it Noviy Vasyuki. Kalmykia's main city even has an Ostap Bender boulevard and a monument to the swindler.

Actor Archil Gomiashvili, who played Ostap in a classic Soviet-era film of "The 12 Chairs," said it is unfair to tar Ostap's name with the audacious crimes of today's Russia.

"If Ostap Bender saw what is happening in Russia, he would not go out on the street, he would be so afraid," he said in an interview in his "Golden Ostap" restaurant in Moscow. "Ostap Bender would never have thought of such things."

"He would not leave people without a crust of bread as the government has today."

Islamic summit calls for state controls to ensure effective functioning of market economy

DHAKA (AFP) — Leaders of eight mainly Islamic developing nations Tuesday ended a two-day summit here with calls for state controls to guard against free-market excesses.

But the "Dhaka Declaration" issued by Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan and Turkey warned against reversing the trend of increasing globalisation.

"For the effective functioning of the market economy, governments must play a positive role in the development and management of international finan-

cial institutions, systems and infrastructure," it said.

The 33-point statement also voiced concern over the alleged lack of responses by international institutions "to implement the many proposals" made in the wake of the global financial crisis.

It added that there was "a compelling need for reforms to guard against possible recurrence of such crises as well as new threats of instability and protectionism."

"While we acknowledged the benefits of globalisation, it is important to recognise its accompan-

ing risks of destabilisation and increased inequality between developed and developing countries... and within countries."

The declaration was issued by leaders and officials of the "Developing Eight" (D-8) nations including Turkish President Suleyman Demirel, prime ministers Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan, Mahathir Mohamad of Malaysia and Sheikh Hasina Wajed of Bangladesh, and Iranian Vice President Hassan Habibie.

The leaders earlier Tuesday held informal talks during a river cruise near

the bustling Bangladeshi capital. The "Dhaka Declaration" was issued after they returned to Dhaka.

The D-8 was founded in 1997 in Istanbul to boost economic ties among its largely Muslim member countries. The Dhaka summit was due in November but was put off due to floods which ravaged Bangladesh.

D-8 members represent 13.5 per cent of the world's population but only four per cent of global trade despite possessing rich resources, including 12 per cent of global oil reserves and 21 per cent of gas reserves.

The "Dhaka Declaration" also called for cooperation within member countries in such fields as agriculture, aquaculture, environment as well as energy.

It appeared to echo some of the known views of Mahathir, who along with his Pakistani counterpart warned during the opening session on Monday against unchecked globalisation.

The next D-8 summit is to be held in Egypt in 2001.

World Bank: Social cost of crisis will outlast return to growth

BANGKOK (AFP) — A modest return to growth forecast for some of Asia's pulverised economies will have little immediate impact on the crushing social problems inflicted by the financial crisis, the World Bank says.

As the currency volatility of 1997 in Thailand, South Korea and Indonesia blossomed into a full-blown economic crisis it triggered a devastating wave of social ills.

Rising unemployment meant a sharp drop in standards of living for many people and hit health care, education and social services, according to a recent report by the Manila-based Asian Development Bank (ADB).

get around that," he said. "So we expect that the coming months, even if we see growth again it will still be difficult."

South Korea said that gross domestic product (GDP) was expected to grow two per cent this year. Thailand's latest agreement with the IMF predicts growth will return in the second quarter of 1998.

And Indonesia, where the economy crashed 13.68 per cent in the last year according to official figures, says GDP growth may grow 1.5 per cent in 1999, even though some private think-tanks have disputed the figure.

unable to meet the costs of health care which simultaneously increase due to rising inflation.

At the same time, as governments are forced to submit to the straightjackets of International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailouts, public spending on health and education drops, shutting more people out of the safety net.

Increasing deprivation in turn, leads to rising crime, a temptation to trade drugs and rising domestic violence, the ADB said in a report on the Social Impact of Asia's crisis released in November.

Exchange Rates Monday, 01-03-99

Currency	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate
JORDAN DINAR	1.0000	0.1897	0.1927	1.8778	1.8389	0.1944	2.3182
BAHRAIN DINAR	5.2980	1.0000	1.0211	8.9504	9.7444	1.0303	12.2895
EGYPT POUND	5.1883	0.1703	0.1703	9.7443	8.5426	1.0303	12.2895
INDONESIAN RUPIAH	0.0325	0.1025	0.1025	1.0000	0.8733	0.1035	1.2330
IRANIAN RIAL	0.5436	0.1028	0.1048	1.0211	1.0000	1.0577	1.3580
ISRAELI SHEQEL	5.1434	0.1703	0.1703	9.7443	8.5426	1.0303	12.2895
LIBYAN DOLLAR	0.4318	0.0815	0.0832	0.8111	0.7943	0.0840	1.0000
MAURITIAN RUPEE	4.6136	0.0804	0.0826	0.8111	0.7943	0.0840	1.0000
NETHERLAND GILDER	21.4331	0.0242	0.0242	4.1339	42.3405	0.0242	2.5873
NEW ZEALAND DOLLAR	1.4124	0.2595	0.2722	2.6522	2.5873	0.2746	3.2701
OMAN RIAL	0.8833	0.1887	0.1702	1.6587	1.6243	0.1717	2.0451
PAKISTANI RUPEE	2.5106	0.4738	0.4835	4.7144	4.6168	0.4881	5.8126
RUSSIAN RUBLE	2.0466	0.3662	0.3944	3.8431	3.7635	0.3979	4.7384
SINGAPORE DOLLAR	8.4198	1.5889	1.6225	15.8105	15.4832	1.6370	19.4938
TAIWANESE DOLLAR	1.8850	0.3180	0.3247	3.1841	3.0866	0.3276	3.9012
THAI BATH	2.8287	0.5338	0.5451	5.3116	5.2017	0.5500	6.5481
UK POUND	11.5588	2.1873	2.2274	21.7046	21.2533	2.2473	26.7810
US DOLLAR	24.8545	4.8904	4.7866	46.6714	45.7053	4.8323	57.5441
VIETNAMESE DONG	51.7834	9.7728	9.9789	97.2381	95.2252	10.0880	118.8009
YEN	2.2763	0.4296	0.4387	4.2744	4.1559	0.4428	5.2701
YUAN	1.4325	0.1718	0.1718	7.7558	7.5903	0.8335	9.5577
YUAN	0.7381	0.1374	0.1403	1.3671	1.3338	0.1418	1.6856
YUAN	17.8621	3.3331	3.4038	33.1857	32.4792	3.4240	40.8921
YUAN	2.1308	0.4021	0.4106	4.0012	3.9183	0.4143	4.9333
YUAN	1.2632	0.2422	0.2473	2.4056	2.3587	0.2489	2.9709

That suffering will not simply evaporate when hammered economies struggle back to their feet, World Bank Vice-President Jean-Michel Severino told AFP.

"There is a lag between the moment at which growth starts to resume and the moment at which it starts to show in the real lives of people," he said.

"Especially as even with additional growth in the coming months and next year, we'll see the impact of the layoffs created by the unavoidable restructuring of the corporate sector," said Severino in Bangkok after a World Bank conference on the social impact of the crisis.

"This is something that the economies of Asia have to go through and it is virtually impossible to

But an improvement in social conditions will take time, as all three nations have suffered from all or some of a devastating combination of mass layoffs, rising wages, falling standards of living and a chafing of social cohesion.

Other heavyweight economies like Hong Kong, Malaysia and the Philippines have also been affected while Myanmar, Vietnam and Laos have seen living standards hit as investment from crisis-hit nations has plunged.

Thailand's Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai has warned that corporate failures have doubled unemployment here.

The result is that children were dropping out of school at alarming rates, mental illnesses are rising and crime is flourishing, he said.

As jobs are lost, the ADB says, people are

Twenty million dollars of a \$47 million World Bank trust fund set up to alleviate the worst social costs of the crisis have already been invested in 36 projects around the region.

But Severino said that despite progress the recovery is fragile and internal shocks could throw it off course.

Solving social problems is not simply a humanitarian necessity but vital for sustainable growth, he said.

"It is very clear that if the social situation continues to worsen it may reach a point at which social unrest might rise and social unrest might itself jeopardise the recovery."

MAJOR CURRENCIES AGAINST JORDAN DINAR

Currency	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate
US DOLLAR	1.0000	1.5890	0.5628	0.8901	0.1678	0.8362	0.4983
EURO	0.8219	0.3518	0.1049	0.1049	0.1049	0.3242	0.1229
GERMAN MARK	1.7775	2.8422	1.0000	1.2267	0.2862	1.4889	0.8676
SWISS FRANK	1.4890	2.3170	0.8152	1.0000	0.2431	1.2146	0.7235
FRANCE FRANC	5.9612	8.5320	3.2537	4.1140	1.0000	4.9868	2.9796
ITALY LIRA	119.3000	190.7807	67.1187	82.3326	20.0127	1.0000	59.8988
HOLLAND GILDER	2.0027	3.2023	1.1267	1.3821	0.3380	1.8787	1.0000
SPAIN PESA	8.1835	13.1554	4.8235	5.6477	1.2728	6.2598	2.8862
FINLAND MARKKA	17.8621	28.6236	9.8868	12.1442	2.8518	14.7562	8.7818
BELGIUM FRANC	36.8628	59.6236	20.6287	25.3023	6.1502	30.7315	18.3086
AUSTRALIA DOLLAR	1.5118	2.5770	1.0000	1.1122	0.2703	1.3608	0.8047
CHINESE YUAN	2.9258	4.8784	1.6480	2.0192	0.4908	2.4523	1.4609
CYPRUS POUND	0.5155	0.8242	0.2080	0.3557	0.0663	0.4221	0.2574
AUSTRIA SCHILLING	12.5048	19.9862	7.0390	8.6300	2.0877	10.4818	6.2440
CANADA DOLLAR	1.5086	2.4123	0.8487	1.0411	0.2581	1.2845	0.7533
EURO	0.8219	1.4527	0.5111	0.6273	0.1824	0.7815	0.4938

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

ACROSS

- Silent asserts
- Spill the beans
- Goose calls
- Aid a criminal
- In person
- Of part of the eye
- Lasso
- Portrait
- Boldness
- Or why?
- the fields we go...
- Writer Coward
- Singer Grant
- Festive affair
- Food merchant
- '60s war zone, briefly
- Out of order
- Imitation butter
- Pearl's look?
- Dryer trapings
- Stick 'em up!
- Contard
- Recorded
- Genealogical chart
- Post-dusk, portically
- Whispering wind
- Timetable abbr.
- Legal decision makers
- "Casablanca" co-star
- Large, bundled package
- Graphic opening?
- Actor Weir
- Revise for print
- Egyptian fertility goddess
- Bang-up time
- Urs' leirs
- Small land mass

DOWN

- a one
- Double-lead instrument
- Positioning of troops
- Upright stone marker
- Explods
- Extremity
- State with conviction
- Dashway, today
- Crouch
- Fall to notice
- Rex Stout's Witte
- Polynesian beverage
- Writter
- Body part
- Dear tooth
- Saxon surname
- Cheech's surname
- Embassy head: abbr.
- Whopper peddler
- So far
- Ingeniously
- Gloomy
- AI of the '60s
- Indians
- Practice boxing
- Knickerbocker shelves
- Dead-eye
- Low-cost
- PTA member
- Wallach or Whitney
- Flowed back
- Wheel
- Amorphous amount
- Loaf about
- Sky bear
- Summoned, old-style
- Kan or Lena
- Seines
- Runner
- Zatopek
- Suffer defeat

ALOA BASRA ERIN
REED EMAIL NUDE
LIVES GOWPUNCHER
AIR PALS MOORED
HAGUE ONER
PAULAS DIALECTS
LENA EARLE SARA
ART DUE TAG
TIER BERRA ABIE
SERENELY MOGULS
DOLE SPEAR
OMEARA STER GIB
DOGCATCHER ELLE
ERAT EXILE RAIL
REDS DIMES AREA

Peanuts

HOW CAN SOMEONE NOT GET ANY VALENTINES?

HOW CAN SOMEONE NOT GET EVEN ONE VALENTINE?

IT'S AN AWFUL FEELING, ISN'T IT?

I WOULDN'T KNOW...

Andy Capp

I WISH HE DIDN'T HAVE TO GO...

WE DON'T HAVE TO GO... WE CAN STAY HERE AND HAVE A PARTY!

YOU DO IT, PET, I'M NOT VERY GOOD AT EXPLAINING...

ANY EXCUSE TO DISTURB ME?

Mutt'n'Jeff

SIR, YOU WON'T BELIEVE BUYING A NEW 1997 CAR LINE THAT IT DOES THINGS YOU CAN HARDLY BELIEVE!

IS IT FAST?

FAST? IF YOU LEFT HERE AT NINE O'CLOCK AT NIGHT YOU COULD BE IN PERDIA AT THREE O'CLOCK THE NEXT MORNING!

I'LL THINK IT OVER!

I CAN'T FIGURE OUT WHY I SHOULD BE IN PERDIA AT THREE O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING!

AM, GOOD EVENING! NOT ALL HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN TO BUY THE CAR?

COULDN'T SLEEP!

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

"It's about your snoring. When planes go over our house at night, passengers can't hear the movie."

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

LEERD

TOAQU

VOCENX

HUBELS

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Yesterday's Jumbles: LARVA CLOVE TANGLE IMPEND

Answer: How do hobos get about? — THEY TRAMP ALONG

Daily Business Deal

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Study finds expatriates owning 16 per cent of empty housing units

A STUDY conducted by the society of investors in the housing sector shows that the private sector contributes only 7.7 per cent of the housing, which is less than 100 square metres in area, for low-income groups. The study was conducted on 7,000 housing units between 1994 and 1997 through 55 investors and companies and covered all areas within the Amman Governorate as well as the governorates of Irbid, Zarqa and Aqaba.

The low contribution was attributed mainly to high land prices which increases the prices of the housing units and to the absence of infrastructure services at the areas where the land prices were low. The present building law was mentioned as another reason for the low share of private sector involvement in housing for low-income groups. "The section related to organising construction does not help to lower housing costs despite regulations issued by the Higher Organising Council regarding cooperative and investment housing projects," the study said. It added that the Municipality of Greater Amman did not yet authorise the execution of the regulations which aim at providing more housing units to low-income groups at low cost.

According to the study, the low-income category could not meet the conditions of financing from banks and specialised financial institutions as well as housing funds. As such, "it is imperative that the government take the appropriate measures to provide this category with an alternative especially after the cancellation of the Housing Bank law," the society said.

The study revealed that 55.6 per cent of

those who work in the private sector resort to pay 9.77 per cent of the cost of a housing unit in instalments over a period ranging between one and three years. 85 per cent for one year, 10 per cent for two years and five per cent for three years, the study showed.

Noting that the private sector concentrates on construction for high- and middle-income groups, the study pointed out that the private sector's average annual sales amounted to 98.7 per cent of the overall output during the four-year period covered by the study. "This means that the market needs such units as the rate of units constructed but not sold, at 1.3 per cent, is small," the society explained.

It found that 16 per cent of the sold units that were empty were owned by Jordanians working abroad. "This means that Jordanian expatriates represent a somehow good percentage of those home-owners each year," the study said highlighting the positive effects of foreign currency revenue to the treasury and the activity in the construction sector. The rate of empty housing units on offer for rent was 5.11 per cent.

The society stressed the importance of reconsidering the Cabinet decision of May 1998 which subjected the income of investors in the housing sector to the income tax in order to encourage them to build good quality housing units at low cost. The society also sought the cancellation of the Onoman profit-sharing system and a reconsideration of the "deposit fees" required by the Water Authority.

By Francesca Ciriaci

AMMAN — The spectre of yet another regional crisis dangles on otherwise optimistic prospects for tourism growth at the turn of the Millennium. Jordanian hoteliers say.

While the Ministry of Tourism expects around two million tourists to visit the Kingdom by the end of the year 2000 — almost a 100 per cent increase over last year's 1.25 million — the private sector is quick to remind officials of how sensitive the industry is to political developments.

"Reservation charts can change overnight," says Michael Nazzal, president of the Jordan Hotel Association (JHA).

"Now, for example, we have high hopes on a big influx of visitors from the Gulf this sum-

Number of tourists needed exceeds government's rosy expectations

Political developments haunt Jordanian hoteliers

mer. But who can tell what will happen after the [May 17] Israeli elections?"

A tourism ministry report announced earlier this week that 82 new hotels will open by the end of the year, and that JD390 million were invested last year in construction works.

Tourism Ministry statistics released yesterday showed a 10 per cent growth in tourism revenue for 1998, confirming the government's positive outlook for the first years of the third Millennium.

According to official figures, last year's 1.25 million visitors earned the Kingdom more than \$850 million — about 12 per cent of the country's gross domestic product.

But hoteliers insist that the government must boost efforts to promote Jordan as a

destination, or fears that the many brand-new hotels that are about to open will remain empty could become a reality.

The total of rooms will grow this year, from 11,500 last year to 18,000 by end of this year — a 50 per cent growth which has accumulated since the signing of the 1994 Jordan-Israel peace treaty.

"It is not a sudden growth, but a significant one, which in turn will require a stronger marketing effort by the government," Nazzal said in an interview with the Jordan Times on Tuesday.

"A general marketing strategy has to be implemented, not simply because it is the year 2000, but because we have these rooms to fill and we need to boost our tourism, whether religious, medical, or recreational.

"The government's main role is to market the country, while hotel owners have to market their hotels once the country is known."

Hoteliers give a thumbs up to the job done by the Jordan Tourism Board (JTB), which has decided to concentrate this year's promotional efforts mainly on the U.S., France, Germany, and Italy, but they complain that funds allocated to marketing are not enough.

"The funds are being controlled by the JTB professionally, but the money is not enough to bring the additional arrivals we need," Nazzal says.

The "additional arrivals" needed by the private sector to flourish exceed the government's rosy expectations.

The JHA has calculated

that two million visitors in the year 2000, with a four-day average stay, will translate in a 60 per cent occupancy rate for Jordan's total of 211 hotels by next fall.

"But even with a 60 per cent occupancy rate, what hoteliers make is only depreciation profit. One needs anything above 60 per cent [occupancy rate] to actually start putting money in his pocket," Nazzal explains.

Last year's average occupancy rate has been estimated at 35 per cent, with lows as disappointing as 11 per cent in some five-star hotels at main tourist attractions, such as Petra and Aqaba.

The current 35 per cent occupancy rate, Nazzal says, might, in some cases, allow hotel owners to cover their expenses.

"All over the world, hotels are a long term-business."

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) The more careful you are, the fewer jobs you'll have to do over. Neatness counts, and appearances matter almost more than what's behind the props. Life is a stage, so put on your best performance. What you can't win by force, you might gain with your dazzling smile.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Nobody would deny that you're a practical, hard-working person, but you do like your luxuries. Today, that's your problem. You could get distracted by something you find overwhelmingly appealing, and make yourself late for an appointment. If you don't want to get yourself yelled at, try not to let that happen.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) If there are still changes you want to make, go ahead and push for them now. Your problem is that you're too popular. You'll have to choose tonight between a meeting with friends and a date with somebody you love. Both will work better tomorrow, if you can reschedule them.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You can expect snags today, so watch out for them. If you can't be two places at once, you'll have to speed things up. You can do amazing things when you have to. You may also have to explain to a loved one that work takes priority now. Sorry, but that's what's most likely to pay the bills.

LEO: (July 22 to August 22) Your fortunes have been bouncing up and down for the past few days, but don't despair. You're entering an intense learning phase. Don't let that news scare you, either, but be patient. You may not find the answer you're seeking until tomorrow.

VIRGO: (August 23 to September 22) Pay attention to the various comings and goings today, especially if money is involved. That's how you'll find out what's really happening. All is not as it appears to be. On the surface, it may look like there's too much, when actually there's not enough. Hold on to what you've got.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) You're getting luckier and better looking. Unfortunately, you're not really getting noticeably more decisive. Just the opposite may be true. No need to worry. Others are glad to look out for your interests. Make sure you choose one you find interesting, too.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) The secret to your success today is relationships. Somebody owes you a favour, and vice versa. You won't have to pay for what you want, if you can trade. You're great backscratcher, and pretty good at figuring out what other people need. If you can find it and provide it, you're in business!

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Push a little harder, to get over the top. Meetings may tie up your business and even private time. You'd rather be relaxing with friends, but that may have to wait. You'll be too busy juggling for a while. You're looking good, though. Hang in there.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You should have pretty well figured out where you're going by now, and that's good. The action's going to get fast and furious. Hopefully you've done the homework already, because there won't be time for that now. Trust your intuition about money, and your experience about love.

AQUARIUS: (January 20 to February 18) All sorts of new information is coming in, and you're gathering it up as fast as you can. It's important, too, because you need to learn quickly in order to stay ahead of the competition. You have an incredible advantage right now, so don't waste a moment of it.

PISCES: (February 19 to March 20) Try to avoid getting into an argument today. Looks like it'll be more expensive than you even dreamed possible. That might mean you have to go along with someone you disagree with, at least temporarily. Save your energy for a fight you can win.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

GEC buys U.S. Reltec for \$2.1b

LONDON (AFP) — The General Electric Company (GEC), the rump telecoms group split from GEC's former Marconi defence electronics arm, Monday took its first post-break-up step by purchasing the U.S. Reltec Corporation for \$2.1 billion.

In January, British Aerospace armaments and aircraft manufacturer bought GEC-Marconi for 7.7 billion pounds (11 billion euros, \$12.8 billion).

The deal left GEC as a telecoms and consumer goods company in possession of a fat cash pile.

The company said that it paid a premium of 36 per cent for Reltec, which designs, manufactures and sells telecommunication products to a string of leading U.S. telecoms groups.

The agreed bid was for \$29.50 per share in Reltec. GEC has inherited with its purchase debts of \$361 million. Reltec's turnover last year was more than \$1 billion, with net income of \$30.4 million.

By Amy Henderson

AMMAN — A subsidiary of the Arab Potash Company (APC) has signed a \$80 million deal with a Canadian firm for the construction of a magnesium oxide and magnesium hydroxide plant.

The Jordan Magnesia Company Ltd. (JORMAG) signed with Canada's AGRA Monenco and its joint venture partner Attila Doga Construction and Installation Company for the plant, to be located near the Arab Potash Company's industrial complex in the Al Safi area, on the shores of the Dead Sea.

AGRA Monenco will provide the engineering and design services for the plant, and Attila Doga will be the constructor.

Basel Hamad, JORMAG general director, said that upon completion, the plant should

produce 50,000 tonnes annually of magnesium oxide and 10,000 tonnes of magnesium hydroxide. The majority of the plant's production will be for export.

Construction will start this month and should be completed within a year.

Magnesium oxide is primarily for industrial applications, especially as a high quality insulator for industrial furnaces. Magnesium hydroxide is used in chemical industries to refine sugar and process uranium. Medicinally, it is important as an antacid and as a laxative.

Hamad said JORMAG expects annual revenues to approach \$28-\$30 million. The plant will employ around 200 people.

"We will be marketing both projects around the world, but Europe is going to be one of our primary tar-

get markets," he said.

JORMAG is a public shareholding company. Partners in the venture include the APC through both direct investment and through its participation in the Jordan Dead Seas Industries Company (JODICO), also a public shareholding company where the APC holds 51 per cent of the equity.

The Social Security Corporation has an additional 14.3 per cent stake in JORMAG, along with Prince Walid Ben Talal of Saudi Arabia (5.9 per cent), the Jordan Investment Corporation, the Arab Bank, the Industrial Development Bank, the Jordan Bank for Investment and Finance and the Jordan National Bank.

Magnesium oxide and magnesium hydroxide are extracted from salt water brine. Due to the nature of the Dead Sea, the magnesium extracted here will be some of the purist in the world.

It will compete in world markets with magnesium products from Italy, Israel, Ireland, the Netherlands, Mexico and Australia.

The Arab Potash Company over the last few years has been actively trying to diversify its production, which has traditionally been restricted to raw potash. It has created a handful of downstream industries through JODICO to exploit the Dead Sea's resources. Last October, JODICO signed a \$120 million deal with the American Ablemberle for the construction of a bromine factory also at the Dead Sea. Other ventures under the JODICO-APC wing are the Jordan Safi Salt Company, a producer of industrial and table salts, and Al Numeira, which extracts mud and salt from the Dead Sea for use in the cosmetics industry.

Hamad said that eventually, JORMAG

hopes to further diversify its own production from raw material to, for example, the manufacture of bricks used in industrial furnaces.

AGRA's Monenco President and CEO, Alex Taylor, said in a statement released to the press that his company was "very pleased to be involved in this important industrial development project for Jordan."

"This project builds on our long-term commitment to this important region and underlines AGRA's growing position as an international leader in professional services for process industries."

The JORMAG project will be AGRA's second in the Kingdom: in 1995, the company helped build the Alneima Bulk Pharmaceutical Plant.

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IOC investigator hopes to publish findings by end of week

SYDNEY (AFP) — The fate of at least 13 IOC members under investigation in the Salt Lake City scandal should be known by the end of the week, the International Olympic Committee's chief investigator said Monday.

However, Dick Pound, a Canadian lawyer and IOC executive board member who chairs the six-man inquiry panel into the alleged misconduct, said any formal decision on whether to expel members guilty of alleged wrongdoing might have to wait until the full IOC session in June.

Pound hoped to publish his report by the end of the week.

"We'd like to have our position in respect of each of the members made clear and public by then," he said in a telephone conference call with media organisations late Monday from Lausanne, Switzerland.

"Recommendations still have to be made. We have talked about these and are trying to reach a consensus."

"We're going to spend much of the next two

days on this on a pretty concentrated basis."

His report will go to the executive board to frame proposals to put before a special general assembly on March 17-18.

The commission has been considering the cases of 13 members, including three who remained under investigation when the initial part of the inquiry concluded in January when nine members were expelled or resigned.

Pound said another "six or seven" members had been implicated in fresh reports from Salt Lake City where 2002 winter games organisers have admitted they spent \$1.2 million in cash payments, scholarships, free medical care and other inducements.

Three members — Phil Coles of Australia, Aswini Kumar of India and Augustin Arroyo of Ecuador — testified before the Pound Commission in Lausanne.

Coles, a director of the Sydney Organising Committee for the 2000 Olympics, was linked to \$45,000 worth of lavish travel and holidays in the

United States.

"I've always felt confident, I've been within the guidelines," he said before flying out of Switzerland.

"It was a fair discussion I briefed them thoroughly," he later told an Australian radio station. Pound said generally speaking, the allegations concerning the additional 10 members were not as serious as the cases made public in January.

"On the new 10, they are not of such an obviously serious nature as the ones we saw in the first slice that we did in late January," Pound said.

"But there are certainly some aspects of their conduct that need explanation and consideration by us and that's what we're in the process of sorting out."

Pound said it was helpful the three members chose to come to Lausanne for meetings he described as "cordial".

Tennis great Bill Talbert dies at 80

NEW YORK (AP) — Bill Talbert, a star player who later became tournament director of the U.S. Open, is dead at age 80.

A 1967 enshrinee of the international tennis hall of fame in Newport, R.I., Talbert died Sunday in his Manhattan home. Cause of death was not immediately known, but he had been confined to a wheelchair for the last several years.

William F. Talbert, born in Cincinnati on Sept. 4, 1918, was diagnosed at age 10 with diabetes. He was recognised as the first diabetic to compete in athletics at the highest international level.

He reached the singles finals at the U.S. Championships — later known as the U.S. Open — in 1944 and 1945 and the U.S. Indoor Championships in 1948-51. He was ranked among the top 10 in the United States from 1941 through 1955, and was a stalwart of the American Davis Cup team.

As a player, he starred in doubles,

teaming with Gardner Mulloy to reach the U.S. doubles final six times, winning in 1942, '45, '46 and '48. He also captured the U.S. Championship mixed doubles with Margaret Osborne four straight years — 1943-46.

Talbert teamed with Tony Trabert, another hall of famer, to win both the French and Italian doubles titles in 1950, and was U.S. Davis Cup captain from 1953-57, defeating Australia to win the Cup in 1954.

Known as "Mr. Tennis," Talbert was named director of the U.S. Open championships at Forest Hills and served as chairman and director of the Open from 1971-75. When the Grand Slam tournament moved to Flushing Meadows, Talbert returned as director from 1978-87 and served as honorary vice chairman until his death.

Having played in both the longest men's doubles match and mixed doubles match on record, Talbert was instrumental in introducing the tiebreaker in a major tournament in

1970.

He was chairman emeritus of the hall of fame, served on the Hall of Fame's executive committee and was tournament chairman of the Hall of Fame Tennis Championships in Newport.

He was a member of the national diabetes advisory board, the president's advisory council of the American Diabetes Association and a director of the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation.

Last year, Talbert marked 50 years of service with the U.S. Banknote Corporation in New York, where he was a vice president from 1953 until his death.

He also co-authored eight books, including the acclaimed "the game of doubles in tennis," and his autobiography, "playing for life." Talbert was married to the former Nancy Pike, an editor for Vogue and Life magazine, from 1946 until her death in 1995. He is survived by two sons, W. Fike and Peter, and two grandchildren.

Anelka poised to sign for Atletico

MADRID (AFP) — French striker Nicolas Anelka is poised to join Spanish First Division side Atletico Madrid next season, the Spanish daily newspaper AS reported Tuesday.

The newspaper claims that the 19-year-old footballer has already had talks with the Spanish club's directors but that the \$24 million transfer fee being asked for the French teenager was delaying the process.

Atletico have been looking for a striker following the departure of Christian Vieri for Italian Serie A side Lazio and injured Francisco Narvaez "Kiko", out of action until the end of the season.

Anelka has told the French media he is lonely in London, where he has four years left on his contract.

But Arsenal's top scorer is staying put according to Arsenal manager, Arsene Wenger, who said he wouldn't swap him for any player in the world, including Ronaldo.

Last week Wenger insisted no offers had been made for Anelka. His comments came days after the French teenager was linked with multi-million pound moves to Barcelona and Juventus.

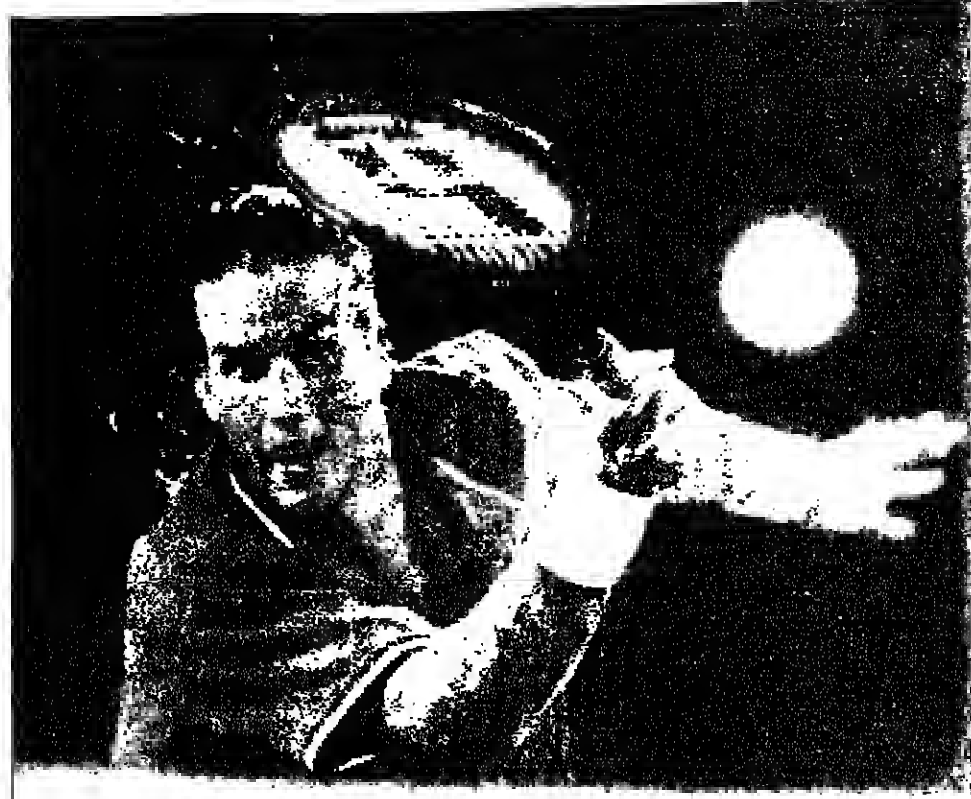
Anelka helped the gunners to the double last season but his two Wembley goals for France against England have sent his profile soaring.

Wenger said: "No club has come in for him. We want to keep our players."

"It just shows how quickly things change. One year ago nobody knew him and suddenly everybody wants to know him."

"In between, he has extended his contract with us and these things are all rumours. When you have a big player, it makes all the agents and newspapers nervous. The right thing for his career is to stay with Arsenal."

Former Italy boss Arrigo Sacchi was sacked by Atletico last month after a run of poor results.



Patrick Rafter

Two-time U.S. Open champion advances in Scottsdale

SCOTTSDALE, Arizona (AP) — Patrick Rafter started fast and hung on. Goran Ivanisevic didn't get rolling until midway through his match.

By different routes, both reached the second round of the Franklin Templeton Tennis Classic.

Rafter beat qualifier Alex O'Brien 6-3, 6-3 Monday night, and Ivanisevic followed with a 5-7, 6-4, 6-1 win over Scott Draper of Australia.

Two more wins for each, and they would meet in the semifinals, with a possible title match with Pete Sampras in the offing. Sampras, the No. 1 player in the world for a record six straight years, opens against Ramon Delgado.

Rafter, winner of the last two U.S. Opens and No. 2 in this tournament, went into singles action for the first time since losing in the third round of the Australian Open on Jan. 22.

Rafter, the first Australian in 25 years to rank in the top five in consecutive years, broke O'Brien once in the first set, then in the first and third games of the second.

Rafter won the last game with the last of his seven aces and a crossing shot off O'Brien's high return of the next service.

"It's very, very difficult to close out a match," said Rafter, the world's fifth-ranked player. "At least, I find it that way. I didn't take advantage of my chances early, and I got tighter and tighter as the match went on. It was just a big relief at the end." Ivanisevic, playing in Scottsdale for the first time in 10 years, had six of his 13 aces in the first set, but draper broke him for the third time in the 12th game to win. Then the rest of the Croat star's game kicked in. Ivanisevic held service the rest of the way and broke the other left-hander four times, three in the short final set.

"I believed I was hitting the ball OK, so I just had to wait until things started working," Ivanisevic said.

No. 7 Thomas Muster of Austria and No. 8 Gustavo Kuerten of Brazil, the two former French Open champions in the strongest Scottsdale field ever, were upset.

Justin Gimelstob defeated muster 6-4, 7-5, and Jerome Golmard of France ousted Kuerten 6-3, 3-6, 6-3.

Gimelstob went into the match ranked 68th in the world, the highest of his career. To Muster's 22nd. But he won 77 per cent of his service points while defeating Muster in their first meeting.

"Having grown up seeing him win the French open (in 1995) and knowing that he was No. 1 in the world at one time, it's a great feeling," Gimelstob said.

In another surprise, Spaniard Fernando Vicente defeated unseeded Jason Stoltenberg of Australia 7-6 (7-3), 7-5.

Stoltenberg, ranked 27th to Vicente's 62nd, reached the Scottsdale final last year before losing to Andre Agassi.

Mariano Zabaleta of Argentina beat Czech Slava Dosedel 5-7, 6-2, 6-2, and Jan-Michael Gambill beat Franco Squillari of Argentina 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 for the right to play the winner of the Sampras-Delgado match.



Goran Ivanisevic

Venables rules out return as England coach

LONDON (AP) — Former England soccer manager Terry Venables on Tuesday ruled out a return to the position he left in 1996, even if he is still a candidate when Kevin Keegan's part-time, four-match stint as national coach is over.

Venables was touted as a firm contender for the job when Glenn Hoddle was fired by the Football Association last month following his controversial comments about disabled people.

But Venables, who managed England from 1994 to 1996, says he is no longer interested in the job.

"It's too late now," he was quoted as saying in Tuesday's Daily Mail newspaper. "If I was going to be the next manager it would have happened by now."

"I think the FA would have let Keegan have anything to take the job — just as long as it wasn't me," he added. "Now I have my own plans. Of course it's disappointing but that's the way it is." Venables, who coached Australia's soccer team in a failed bid to reach the France '98 World Cup finals and then returned briefly to league management at Crystal Palace, said he didn't expect Keegan to extend his commitment as national boss beyond England's next four games.

"Kevin's got too good a thing going at Fulham to want to leave and I can't really see him changing his mind," he said.

"Ultimately, I think he will go and I've no idea who will take over. But I wouldn't want to see a foreign coach in charge of an England side."

SPORTS IN BRIEF

China prepares for qualifiers

SHANGHAI (AFP) — The Chinese Olympic football team has kicked off a two-week training session here aimed at sharpening their form ahead of qualifiers to start in May, the official Xinhua news agency reported Tuesday. Headed by British coach Bobby Houghton, the side hopes to compete in the games for the first time since its only Olympic appearance, at Seoul in 1988. China will host regional rival Iran here in a warmup on March 14. Iran beat bronze-medalist China twice enroute to taking gold in December's Asian Games.

Connors defeats Vilas

NAPLES (AP) — Jimmy Connors began his quest for a third Nuveen Masters title with a 7-6, (9-7), 6-1 victory Monday over longtime rival Guillermo Vilas. Connors, who won the tournament in 1995 and 1997, faces Yannick Noah on Wednesday. The \$300,000 Nuveen Masters is the season-ending championship event on the senior tennis circuit. It features the top eight players on the tour. John McEnroe, who replaced Connors as the tour's top player for the first time this season, was forced to withdraw from the event.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& YANNICK HIRSCH
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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

- Q. 1 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
4Q73 0J102 0J5 4A0109
The bidding has proceeded:
NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
10 Pass 7
What do you bid now?
- Q. 2 - East-West vulnerable, as South you hold:
47 0Q782 0A10784 4KQ8
The bidding has proceeded:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
10 Pass 10 Pass
What do you bid now?
- Q. 3 - As South, vulnerable, you hold:
48 085 0Q8762 4KJ84
Partner opens the bidding with one club. What do you respond?
- Q. 4 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
4J83 08742 0A85 4Q8
Partner opens the bidding with one no trump. What do you respond?
- Q. 5 - As South vulnerable, you hold:
4J5 07 0K2 4AKQJ7652
Partner opens the bidding with one heart. What do you respond?
- Q. 6 - Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
48 085 0Q8762 4KJ84
Partner opens the bidding with one club. What do you respond?

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	PHILADELPHIA '1'	PHILADELPHIA '2'	PLAZA	CONCORDE	GALLERIA 1	GALLERIA 2	
	Robert De Niro.. in RONIN	Tom Hanks & Sally Field .. in FORREST GUMP	Comedian Adel Imam.. in AL ZA'EEM	Adel Imam & Wafa' Amer.. in ALWAD MAHAOUS TBA' AL WAZIA	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Eddie Murphy.. in DR. DOOLITTLE	ABDOUN www.cns.com.jo/Galleria Cameron Diaz ...in THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT MARY	CLOSED
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Listings for films and showing times as received by cinemas and their advertising agencies.

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Games officials to assess Kingdom's teams

AMMAN — The executive office of the 9th Pan-Arab Games (Al Hussein Games), presidents of sport federations and the Jordan Olympic Committee will meet next week to discuss preparations for the Games which will be held in Amman Aug. 15-31. HRH Prince Faisal is expected to attend the meeting, which will examine the situation of local teams, their preparations and financial and administrative obstacles facing them. For that purpose, Minister of Youth and Culture Talal Sataan Al Hassan has asked the Games' technical committee to prepare a comprehensive report on the situation of all competing national teams.

Arab countries urged to support Games; Algeria host in 2003

AMMAN — The General Assembly of the Council of Arab Minister of Youth and Sports has agreed that Algeria will host the 10th Pan-Arab Games in 2003. At the conclusion of their recent three-day meeting in Algeria, the committee said Libya will host the 11th Pan-Arab Games in 2007. The committee also called on Arab countries to effectively participate in this year's Games in Amman and provide \$500,000 through the council and another \$500,000 from the Arab League in financial assistance. The meeting also approved the formation of a ministerial committee to visit some Arab countries capable of supporting the Games. The general assembly also decided to set up this year's Arab Youth Forum in Yemen, and hold the Arab youth training camp for voluntary work in Palestine and provide \$100,000 to the Palestinian National Authority for the rehabilitation of sports facilities. Jordan along with 20 Arab countries took part in the meeting through a delegation that was headed by Minister of Youth and Culture Talal Sataan Al Hassan and included Director of the Pan-Arab Games Isam Aridah, Secretary General of the Jordan Olympic Committee Ismat Kurdi and President of the Executive Committee Sari Hamdan.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

Knicks' coach still looking for toughness on road

NEW YORK (R) — New York Knicks coach Jeff Van Gundy was happy with a 85-78 victory over the visiting Cleveland Cavaliers on Monday, but he was still looking for his team to show the mental toughness it takes to win on the road.

The Knicks, 9-5 overall but just 2-4 away from Madison Square Garden, are slogging through one of those compressed stretches in which there is a game almost every day because of the lockout-shortened schedule.

They were beaten handily Friday in Boston and Sunday at Detroit, with a game against their arch foes in Miami coming up Tuesday night — three games in three days, four in five, 11 in 16.

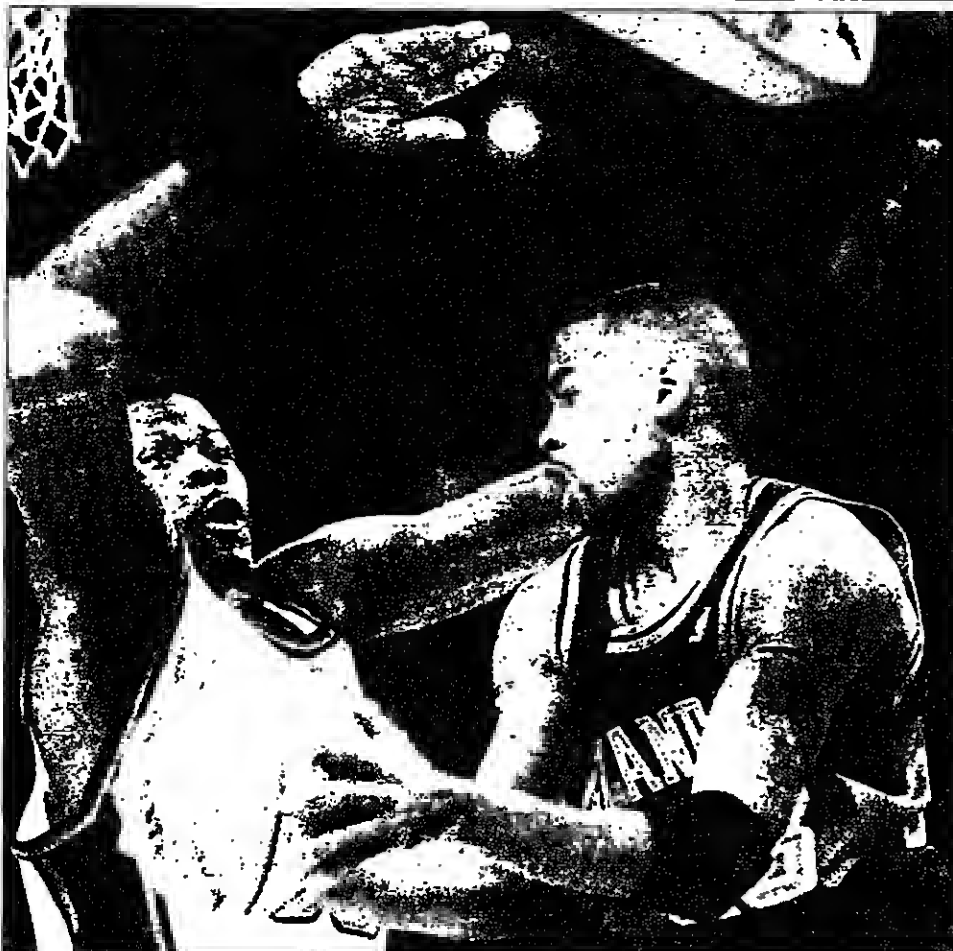
"We have shown good mental toughness at home so far," said Van Gundy, one of the NBA's most open and thoughtful coaches when talking with reporters.

"The question is, can we do that same thing on the road, show mental toughness? And to date we haven't. That's our challenge," he added.

"You don't really develop that as a player. You either have it or you don't, that will when situations are adverse. So in a pressurized situation on the road, usually true character comes out. Our true character has to come out."

"I think that's when a team is mentally tough. Only time will tell," said Van Gundy.

In the Eastern Conference, which Van Gundy sees as very even in quality, he said only three teams have proven they can win on the road: Miami, Indiana and Philadelphia. All the others have yet to show their mettle.



Cleveland Cavaliers guard Derek Anderson (R) has his path to the net blocked by New York Knicks centre Patrick Ewing (L) in the first quarter at Madison Square Garden in New York, NY (AFP photo)

"There's going to be two or three very good teams missing the playoffs," he said.

Van Gundy downplayed the physical difficulties of the compressed schedule, even though centre Patrick Ewing and forward Larry Johnson are both battling chronic knee pain that comes and goes.

Both scored 16 points Tuesday and looked lively after poor performances against the Pistons, when Ewing tallied just six points. Van Gundy paid special tribute to his 36-year-old centre's ability to ignore his age and ailments and bounce back from a bad outing.

"He's one who rarely plays two subpar games in a row. Also he has great pride, and he wasn't happy with his energy level yesterday along with the rest of the team," Van Gundy said.

"You just have to have a resolve about you," said Van

Gundy. "When we played Boston, they had two days off and we were playing back to back. Then tonight, Cleveland had three days off and we were playing."

Tomorrow Miami's being rested and this will be our third game in three nights.

"And you know what? None of it matters. You have to go out there and be mentally strong and expect to win."

"At times I think on the road it's easier to make excuses."

And I think certainly we've given in on the road much easier than at home. Like tonight, when it was

52-50 (in the third quarter after leading 48-40 at half-time) we hung in there." As is their tradition, the Knicks did it with defence.

Ewing had four blocks, and he and his teammates made the area around the basket a no-fly zone for Cleveland.

The Knicks held the Cavaliers to 30 per cent shooting, shutting out star forward Shawn Kemp in the second half — no field goals and just four points.

"It's because we fouled them every time they got close," said Van Gundy with a smile.

Iverson scores 38 as Sixers win over Wizards

WASHINGTON (R) — The Wizards' game plan was to stop Allen Iverson. It didn't quite work out that way.

On the day he was named player of the month for February, Iverson began March by burning the Washington Wizards for 38 points to lead the Philadelphia 76ers to a 104-89 victory.

Iverson scored 25 of his points in the decisive first half, when the Sixers jumped out to a 34-42 lead on the way to their fifth straight victory.

"He basically did anything he wanted to do," Wizards all-star guard Mitch Richmond said. "We knew we had to stop him. We knew he was the only guy that was going to give us problems and we didn't meet up to the challenge." He scored at will against Washington point guard Rod Strickland, forcing Strickland into three quick early fouls.

The NBA's leading scorer shot 13-of-24 from the field and made 11-of-14 free throws.

"He's playing the best of anybody in this short season."

He's a young guy and he is full of energy," Richmond said of Iverson.

"His confidence is flowing right now and he has the green light. It doesn't matter where he shoots it from, he feels it's going to go in."

Juwan Howard led the Wizards with 21 points.

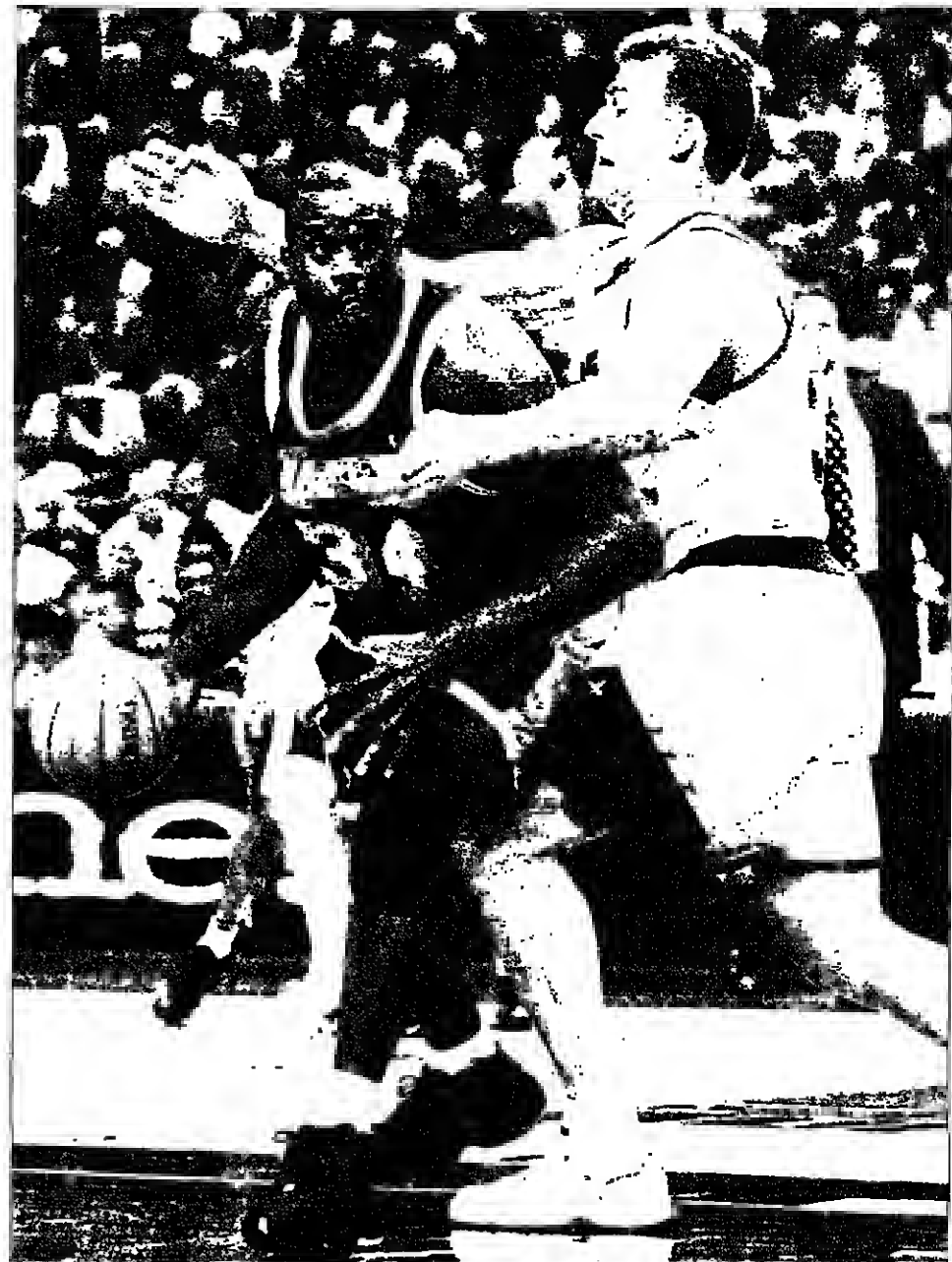
In Boston, the struggling Nets finally stopped the bleeding, when Keith Van Horn made a fallaway jumper at the buzzer as New Jersey snapped a six-game losing streak with a 99-97 victory over the Celtics.

Van Horn missed six consecutive shots before his last one bounced off the rim and went in. He finished with 20 points.

Kendall Gill scored 23 points, Kerry Kittles added 20 points, eight assists and seven rebounds and Jayson Williams pulled down 16 boards for New Jersey.

Antoine Walker had 21 points and rookie Paul Pierce added 20 points for the Celtics.

In Sacramento, Vin Baker scored a season-high 31 points and Gary Payton posted a triple double to lead the Seattle SuperSonics to a 105-102 victory over the Kings.



Los Angeles Lakers center Shaquille O'Neal is fouled by Phoenix Suns center Joe Kleine during the first quarter at America West Arena in Phoenix, AZ (AFP photo)

Not to be outdone, however, Payton came up with his eighth career triple double on 28 points, 10 rebounds and 12 assists.

Chris Webber led Sacramento, posting his 13th double-double in 14 games with 20 points and 14 rebounds.

In New York, the Knicks bounced back from an embarrassing blowout in Detroit with an 85-78 win over the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Patrick Ewing had 16 points, 12 rebounds and four blocked shots for New York, which avenged a 98-74 loss in Cleveland 11 days ago and lost by 21 to the Pistons Sunday.

The Knicks nearly blew a 16-point lead before Ewing scored six during a 15-2 run to help build a 67-52 advantage early in the fourth quarter.

Shawn Kemp scored 19 points for the Cavaliers, but was held to just four in the second half.

In Phoenix, Shaquille O'Neal had 25 points and nine rebounds and Derek Harper added 18 points as the Los Angeles Lakers extended their winning streak to four games with a 97-91 triumph over the Suns.

O'Neal made 12-of-19 shots and Harper sank 7-of-9 as the Lakers improved to 3-0 under coach Kurt Rambis.

Dennis Rodman, playing his third game for the Lakers, grabbed 16 boards as Los Angeles out-rebounded Phoenix 47-34.

Tom Gugliotta had 20 points and nine rebounds and Rodman's former Bulls' teammate, Luc Longley, added a season-high 16 points for Phoenix.

In Orlando, Penny Hardaway just missed a triple double with 19 points, 10 rebounds and nine assists as the Magic remained perfect at home with a 70-67 victory over the Atlanta Hawks.

Dikembe Mutombo scored a season-high 23 points and grabbed 12 rebounds for the Hawks, who were playing without injured guard Steve Smith and forward Alan Henderson.

In Charlotte, Derrick Coleman scored 24 points, including the go-ahead free throw, pulled down 12 rebounds and came up with a key block in the closing seconds to lead the Hornets to a 91-88 victory over the Toronto Raptors.

David Wesley added 21 for Charlotte, including a pair of free throws with 1.4 seconds left.

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U.N. investigator cites continued abuses of Palestinian rights

GENEVA (R) — The U.N. investigator for human rights in the occupied Arab territories reported on Tuesday that Israel had discontinued the most flagrant torture methods, but was depriving Palestinians of economic and other basic freedoms.

Hannu Halinen, a Finnish expert serving in the independent United Nations post, also said abuses including torture appeared to be increasing on the part of the Palestinian National Authority.

"Violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories have continued during the period under review, to a large extent along the same lines as in the past," Halinen said in his 17-page report to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights.

The 53-member commission opens its annual six-week session in Geneva on March 22 to examine violations worldwide. Israel is regularly condemned at the forum for alleged violations.

"While there is certain positive development to be recognised on the Israeli side — such as the decrease in administrative detentions and discon-

tinuation of the most flagrant torture methods — it appears that such violations are increasing on the Palestinian side," Halinen said.

"The pressure exercised by the occupying power on the Palestinian Authority, while explaining many violations, does not justify them, nor does it absolve the Palestinian Authority of its responsibility."

The report was based on a trip in January to Jerusalem, Gaza, Ramallah, Jericho, Tel Aviv and Cairo. Halinen met officials including Palestinian President Yasser Arafat as well as Israeli non-governmental organisations.

He regretted Israel's "lack of cooperation." Halinen said the expansion of existing Israeli settlements and the building of new ones, as well as bypass roads connecting the settlements to each other and Israel, was the source of greatest concern in the occupied territories.

"These concerns have been exacerbated by the unilateral suspension by Israel on 2 December 1998 of the implementation of the Wye River memorandum," he added.

Halinen cited confiscation of

Palestinian-owned land and an increased rate of demolition of Palestinian houses. Farmers in some areas were prevented by Israeli authorities from harvesting their crops. Closures and curfews restricted movement and jobs.

On the other hand, the U.N. investigator said that the number of administrative detainees held by Israel had "declined considerably" in the year and stood at fewer than 100 people.

He added: "Administrative detentions by the Palestinian Authority continue to be worrying. Reportedly there was a sharp increase in detentions during the last months of 1998. Many cases were related to individuals exercising their right to freedom of expression."

On torture by Israel's general security service, Halinen said he was informed about "an interrogation method which consisted of cutting off a detainee's blood circulation by placing him in extremely tight handcuffs; the resulting strong pressure on the upper arm causes the person to lose consciousness in approximately three minutes."



A DIFFERENT KIND OF RIDE: English Formula One driver Johnny Herbert swaps his Stewart F1 car Tuesday for a backseat ride in a Royal Australian Air Force precision flying Roulette team plane over Melbourne, Australia. Herbert, along with the rest of the Formula One drivers and teams, have arrived in Melbourne ahead of the first race of the year, set for Sunday, March 7 (AP photo)

'U.S. used UNSCOM to spy on Iraqi army'

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The United States used a U.N. electronic surveillance system in Iraq to spy on the Iraqi military for almost three years, the Washington Post said Tuesday citing unidentified U.S. government officials.

From March 1996, U.S. intelligence services used UNSCOM's remote monitoring system to intercept a high volume of ordinary Iraqi military communications without the knowledge of the U.N. agency, the daily said.

The report contradicts statements by U.S. officials that U.S. spying activity was done in support of the U.N. Special Committee's (UNSCOM) mission to monitor Iraq's disarmament efforts.

The Post's report also

lends support to former UNSCOM inspector Scott Ritter, who in an upcoming book reviewed a week ago by the New York Times, said that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) had placed spies among the UNSCOM team since 1992.

State Department spokesman James Foley dismissed Ritter's claims last week as "unfathomable except as elements which can only serve [Iraqi President] Saddam Hussein's propaganda regime."

Iraq had been accusing UNSCOM of being infiltrated with U.S. spies. The U.N. inspection team has been barred from continuing its work in Iraq since late last year and its future is under debate in the United Nations.

U.S. government officials told the Washington Post that they considered the risk of discrediting UNSCOM by infiltrating it for their own eavesdropping.

But, they concluded, the stakes were so high in the conflict with Iraq and the probability of discovery so low, that the risks were worth running.

The officials said the U.S. technicians who installed and maintained UNSCOM's remote-monitoring system were intelligence operatives and the repeater stations the operatives built had a covert capability.

When it was upgraded in March 1996, antennas were hidden in the station's structures capable of intercepting microwave transmissions linking Iraqi commanders to infantry and armoured forces in the field.

Such communications, which are difficult to intercept by aircraft or satellite, were of considerable value to U.S. military planners, but generally unrelated to UNSCOM's mandate, the daily said.

The principal designer of the oew system was a military intelligence operative whose secretive "maintenance" missions in Iraq caused friction with then UNSCOM director of operations, U.S. air force Colonel James Moore, who eventually was recalled by Washington, the Post said.

Qadhafi says Lockerbie deal near despite ultimatum

BENGHAZI (AFP) — Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi said Tuesday that a settlement of the Lockerbie bombing affair was still near despite last week's ultimatum from Britain and the United States.

The ultimatum had nearly dashed all chances of a compromise, being reached, but swift intervention by Saudi and South African mediators had put the deal back on track, the Libyan leader said.

"We reached a compromise which saves face on all sides thanks to the efforts of [South African President Nelson] Mandela and Saudi Arabia as well as

the contribution of [U.N. Chief Kofi] Annan," Qadhafi said.

The U.S.-British ultimatum came close to sabotaging the compromise and would have done so if Mandela and Saudi Arabia had not intervened to ask Libya not to complicate the situation," he said.

The United States and Britain on Friday set a month-long deadline for Libya to surrender two suspects wanted for the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed 270 people.

Its two nationals for trial, saying it had to have guarantees of a "fair trial" first.

Qadhafi paid tribute to the role of South African and Saudi envoys in helping to broker a settlement of the crisis.

A Saudi envoy had arrived in Libya on Tuesday morning to "ask me not to complicate the situation and to assure me that everything is happening for the best," he said.

"Personally, I have confidence in the word of Mandela which in my view is stronger than a Security Council resolution," he said.

He said he had also received a "letter of guarantees" about the trial of the two Libyans from Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah Ben Abdul Aziz.

Mandela and his senior aide, Jakes Gerwel, and the Saudi Arabian ambassador to Washington, Prince Bandar Ben Sultan, last month succeeded in persuading Qadhafi to accept a compromise in the 10-year-old Lockerbie case.

Under the compromise, two Libyans suspected of involvement in the bombing will be tried in a court in the Netherlands under Scottish law and will, if found guilty, serve their sentences in Scotland under U.N. supervision.

Annan wrote to Qadhafi last week providing final clarifications sought by Tripoli, which still wants guarantees about the lifting of U.N. sanctions once the two are handed over to the Netherlands for trial.

"We are waiting for a comprehensive settlement and we hope to reach a solution to this affair," said Qadhafi, calling on the Libyan people to "trust the word of Mandela and the Saudis and their credibility."

The U.N. Security Council has promised to suspend an air and arms embargo, in force since 1992, once the two Libyans are handed over for trial.

Khatami supporters sweep municipal polls in Iran

TEHRAN (AP) — Moderate candidates were leading in all 15 seats in Tehran and appear to have routed hardliners in most other races nationwide in Iran's first municipal elections, according to partial results published Tuesday.

The outcome of Friday's polls is an endorsement of the liberal President Mohammad Khatami's efforts to ease the social, cultural and political restrictions imposed by the hardliners in Iran's clerical government.

Jamileh Kadivar, the top female vote-getter in Tehran, said she expects the power struggle between the moderates and the conservatives to intensify before

parliament elections scheduled for early next year.

"These council elections show the political alignments in Iran. Both sides fielded their biggest players in these elections in order to gauge the mood for the majlis [parliament] elections," Kadivar said in an interview.

Kadivar, a former Khatami adviser running for a seat in Tehran, garnered 46,000 votes for the third position.

With most of the votes counted, Khatami's supporters were leading in all the 15 seats in the Tehran municipal council, according to partial results released by the interior ministry.

It said moderates and independents were also leading in many villages, towns and cities, where about 330,000 candidates ran for some 200,000 seats.

The final count is expected by Friday.

Women were the front-runners in at least 20 cities and nearly all of them are supporters of Khatami who has encouraged women to play a bigger role in politics.

"Iranian society appears to want to give women the chance to prove themselves. Men have not done so well, and so people think 'let's give the women a chance'," Kadivar said.

"Khatami has stressed that one should look beyond gender. His emphasis is not

whether one is a man or woman, but on capabilities and potentials," she said.

Since he took office last August — with an overwhelming support of women voters — Khatami has fought an uphill battle with the hardliners to ease the strict laws in place since the 1979 Islamic revolution deposed the pro-Western shah's rule.

With the stakes so high, the hardliners put up a bitter fight in the municipal elections.

On the eve of the polls, a hard-line dominated electoral supervision board disqualified about 50 candidates, mostly moderates, including Kadivar. But Khatami ruled the disqualifications illegal and instructed the interior ministry, which ran the elections, to let the candidates contest.

On Monday, the chairman of the board said he would challenge the election results.

"We will definitely nullify the votes of those candidates who were disqualified by us ahead of the polls and were illegally allowed to run by the interior ministry," said Mohsen Yahyavi, the head of the board.

It was not clear whether the electoral supervision board or the interior ministry would prevail in the dispute. Both organisations claim to have the right to supervise the polls.

Mideast countries must work together or face water shortage — study

RAMALLAH (AP) — Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians must work together to ensure an adequate water supply or future generations will face a shortage, said a study presented Tuesday.

The study is the result of a five-year collaboration of scientists from the Palestinian National Authority, Israel, Jordan and the U.S. National Academy of Science.

It focused on the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jordan and Israel — a region where approximately 12 million people live.

"Freshwater supplies in the Middle East now are barely sufficient to maintain a quality standard of living," said Gilbert White, chair of the study committee and professor of geography at the University of Colorado.

Committee members told a news conference Tuesday that the demand for water would increase considerably because of economic development and population growth.

"Precautions must be taken, very soon," said Uriel Soffer, director of Blaustein Institute for Desert Research at Israel's Ben Gurion University.

Access to water sources is to be one of the issues in talks between Israel and the Palestinians on a final peace agreement. Large water aquifers sit under the West Bank, which is claimed by the Palestinians as part of a future state, but for now remains largely under Israeli control.

"The study recognises the critical need for water use in the area to be economically feasible and fair," said Ayman Rabi from the Palestinian Hydrology Group.

The study showed that water consumption in Israel is more than three times higher than in the Palestinian areas.

Hizbollah guerrillas to continue attacks against top Israelis

TYRE (AFP) — The Lebanese Shiite Muslim Hizbollah pledged Tuesday to pursue guerrilla attacks to kill top Israeli leaders and army officers in occupied parts of southern Lebanon.

"We are determined to continue targeting Zionist leaders and officers with ambushes and bombings as long as they are on our land, after we had been hunting down their Mirkava tanks and assaulting

their positions," said Sheikh Nabil Qawook, Hizbollah official in southern Lebanon.

"The resistance is totally prepared and completely ready for any confrontation and we will not allow the Israeli military leadership to catch its breath and regain its forces," Qawook said.

Qawook was speaking during a funeral attended by more than 2,000 Hizbollah followers at the

village of Tair Dibbah, near the southern port city of Tyre, for one of two guerrillas killed Sunday in clashes with Israeli forces.

Hussein Abdullah Mughniyeh was slain during a day of harsh Israeli reprisals after Sunday's killing of four Israelis, including the Jewish state's top general in the buffer zone it occupies in southern Lebanon.

Hizbollah's second "martyr,"

Adnan Mohammad Hassan, will be buried Wednesday in his native village of Bisariyeh, near the town of Nabatiyeh in southern Lebanon.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced Monday a "new policy" of harsher reprisals after the deaths of seven Israelis in Lebanon in less than a week in attacks by Hizbollah guerrillas.

Arabs, Europeans ask Arafat to delay statehood declaration

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Egypt and Jordan have asked Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to delay a planned declaration of statehood on May 4, a senior Palestinian official said Tuesday.

The two Arab countries have joined Europe and the United States in calling on Arafat to delay declaring statehood at the end of the negotiating period outlined in the 1993 Oslo agreement.

Planning Minister Nabil Shaath said the Arab and European position is that a declaration on May 4 would prejudice the Israeli election on May 17.

Hard-line Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has already used Arafat's May 4 threat as a campaign issue, in an apparent bid to rally voters opposed to further compromise with the Palestinians behind his candidacy.

Egypt and Jordan "cite tactical reasons that May 4 is a date that no longer serves the interest of the Palestinians and a delay of a few months does," Shaath told reporters.

Shaath said the Arabs and European believe if the Palestinians delay they would be able to say they have given Israel a chance to implement last October's U.S.-brokered land-for-security Wye River agreement and make up for time wasted.

"Any delay will have to come with guarantees," said Shaath.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Driver arrested for dumping body

CAIRO (AFP) — An ambulance driver was arrested on Tuesday after he dumped the body of a man who died on the way to the hospital, saying his job was to transport the sick rather than the dead. Egyptian police said. The state-run Nile River Transport Company asked ambulance driver Hani Fuad to take one of its employees Mohammad Ali Khalifa, 58, to the hospital after he suffered a severe asthma attack, the police said. But, when the patient died on the way to the hospital, the driver turned around and took the body back to the transport company. When he was then asked to take the body to the morgue, the ambulance driver grabbed the stretcher on which the body was lying and dumped it at the company's door, the police said. The state prosecutor ordered the driver detained for four days pending further deliberation, saying: "The simplest humanitarian principles required the ambulance driver to take the body to a decent place."

Israeli guard shot Berlin Kurds in head

BERLIN (R) — Two of the four Kurds killed by security guards during a protest last month at the Israeli consulate in Berlin were shot in the head, an official source said on Tuesday. The source, who had seen the autopsy reports, confirmed a report in the German newspaper Berliner that two of the dead, one an 18-year-old girl, died of head wounds. A second newspaper, the Tagesspiegel, quoting from what it said was the official Israeli report on the Feb. 17 incident, said a guard fired from above into a group of Kurds who followed him up a stairway. Israel said last week its guards had fired in the air and at the legs of several dozen Kurds who stormed the mission after reports — denied by Israel — that Israeli agents had helped Turkey capture Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan in Kenya.

First Arab Israeli on supreme court

TELAVIV (AFP) — For the first time in the history of the Jewish state, an Arab Israeli judge took a seat Tuesday on the nation's supreme court. Abdul Rahman Zoabi, 68, joined the 13 other judges on Israel's highest judicial body and was scheduled to hear his first case on Wednesday, court spokesman Moshe Gorali told AFP. "This is the first time that a Muslim judge has been appointed to the Supreme Court," Gorali said. Zoabi, a resident of the Arab city of Nazareth in northern Israel, has been serving as deputy president of the Nazareth district court and will sit on the supreme court bench for nine months.

Leaning Tower of Pisa leaning less

PISA (AFP) — The Leaning Tower of Pisa is leaning a little less — 1.5 millimetres, to be exact — thanks to intensive efforts to prop it up. The head of the committee to safeguard the landmark, Michele Jamiolkowski, said Tuesday it was hoped another four millimetres could be gained before a second phase of excavations started to stabilise the tower. "The first excavations, begun a month ago, produced positive results. The tilt has diminished by 1.5 millimetres," Jamiolkowski told reporters. The Leaning Tower of Pisa was closed to the public in January 1990 because of security concerns. Experts decided to sink 12 14-metre-long supports around the base of the tower, which they surrounded with a network of metal braces and steel cables to stabilise the structure while they excavated earth from around it.

Taliban give forcible haircuts to youth

KABUL (AFP) — Taliban soldiers here Tuesday forced some two dozen youths to get a haircut, while the religious police beat women for showing their ankles, witnesses said. The soldiers herded 25 young men into a centre near the ministry of justice where barbers went to work on their heads, they said. "They took me inside and gave me a haircut without any explanation," Ahmad Juwid told AFP. Rubbing his freshly mowed head, Juwid said each was made to pay 3,000 afghanis (around eight cents) to barbers employed by the centre. Cobblers at a nearby pavement said the haircut operation had been going on for several days now and people avoided passing through the area.

Nobel laureates on mission to Iraq

BAGHDAD (AFP) — Two Nobel Peace Prize laureates, Mairead Corrigan Maguire of Northern Ireland and Argentina's Adolfo Perez Esquivel, are to visit Iraq on an anti-sanctions mission, a U.S. peace group said Tuesday. Fellowship for Reconciliation said the laureates were part of a FOR delegation which is to start its visit on Friday, travelling to Baghdad overland from Amman. The delegation is to deliver 1,000 "covenants of peace" signed by North American religious and secular communities, "apologising for the way the United States has treated the Iraqi people," the FOR said in a statement.

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